NEWS / A2
GMA appoints Romulo Neri to head SSS

NEWS / A22
Abu Sayyaf earned P1.4B from ransom, says terror expert

LIFESTYLE / C1
How to create all good vibrations in your home in these hard times

BUSINESS / B1
Gov't lowers growth forecasts for next 2 years

Soaring prices choke Metro LRT, MRT trains

AS INFLATION SOARS AND GASOLINE prices climb relentlessly, more and more commuters in Metro Manila are squeezing into trains and buses, putting an enormous strain on public transport services.

On the positive side, Metro Manila's legendary traffic jams are diminishing—but that's only good news for those who can afford to travel by car in the metropolis of 15 million people.

Unlike commuters in many other

SOARING A10

Demand for RP nurses overseas slowing down

By Kristine L. Alave

FILIPINOS ASPIRING TO JUMP ON THE nursing bandwagon should think twice because the once burgeoning demand overseas has begun to wane, according to the Philippine Nurses Association (PNA).

"Many licensed nurses are now underemployed or unemployed as a result of

DEMAND A11

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Wednesday, July 9, 2008 ★ 8 sections / Vol. 23 / No. 215 P10 website: www.inquirer.net

Jeep, bus, taxi fares up

Gov't order takes effect starting on Friday

By Michael Lim Ubac

AN ADDITIONAL BURDEN on commuters but a small relief for drivers and owners of public utility vehicles.

Starting this Friday, the minimum fare for public buses, vans and jeepneys will go up by at least 7 percent, the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) announced yesterday.

LTFRB Chair Thomas Lomtong said Malacañang ordered the fare increases. Transport groups seeking fare hikes are usually given 10 days to present their respective positions.

Based on Lomtong's announcement, jeepneys may charge a minimum fare of P8.50, up 50 centavos, and an additional 25 centavos, or from P1.25 to P1.50, for each succeeding kilometer.

Taxicabs may start charging an "add-on" rate of P10. However, there will be no increase in the flag-down rate and waiting time.

Buses plying Metro Manila routes may charge an additional P1, or from P9 to P10 for the first five kilometers, with additional 20 centavos for every succeeding kilometer (P1.75 to P1.80).

Air-conditioned buses may charge P12 from P11.50 plus P2.25 per succeeding kilometer from P1.75.

The latest round of fare increases is the second in less than two months amid soaring crude oil prices in the international market that have pushed

JEEP A20

A DAY AT THE TRAIN STATION During morning peak hours, the lines at the LRT stations trail all the way down staircases onto the street level. The surge of commuters is worrying train officials. "We can only take so much," says Roberto Lastimoso, MRT general manager. "Our situation is becoming critical." (See story on right ear.) RG YUO

2 BMI probers quit with guns blazing

By Leila B. Salaverria

YIELDING TO A DEMAND FOR IMPARTIALITY two members of the Board of Marine Inquiry (BMI) yesterday withdrew from the investigation of the sinking of the MV Princess of the Stars.

But veteran ship captains Bear Adm. Benjamin Mata and Commodore Amado Romillo went out with guns blazing against Sulpicio Lines Inc., owners of the ill-fated ferry, denying that they had been biased.

Mata and Romillo said they were stepping aside "to preserve the integrity of the inquiry."

Sulpicio Lines lawyer Arthur Lim asked the board to exclude Mata and Romillo for allegedly prejudging the case.

"The court or board must not only be impartial but it must appear to be impartial," Lim said. "You sit here as judges. You cannot judge if you have already prejudged."

The inhibition of Mata and Romillo halted yesterday's BMI hearing, which will be resumed today.

Sulpicio Lines has asked the Manila

SANS PROBERS A10

PCG asked to produce officer who cleared ship

By Christian V. Esguerra

CONGRESSMEN INVESTIGATING THE latest maritime disaster involving Sulpicio Lines Inc. are looking for the lone Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) officer who inspected and cleared the ill-fated MV Princess of the Stars for sailing.

Some lawmakers are incredulous at how the officer managed to inspect the seven-story, 23,800-ton passenger vessel—supposedly in just 15 minutes.

Bacolod Rep. Monico Puentevella, chair of the House committee on transportation, asked PCG officials during Monday's hearing to present the vessel's

PCG LURED A10

Cadiz, Legazpi feasts prove fish safe to eat

By Carla P. Gomez in the Visayas, Ephraim Aguilar and Delfin Mallari in Southern Luzon and Amy R. Remo in Manila

FISH IS WITH YOU.

To prove fish is safe to eat, they served free sinugba or grilled fish in Cadiz City, and offered sweet and sour escabeche in Legazpi City. A militant group jumped on the fish wagon and also cooked fishballs as a sign of protest at the entrance to the Department of Agriculture in Quezon City.

CADIZ A14

Gov't economists set to meet bishops on VAT propoor projects

By Christine O. Avendaño and Michelle V. Remo

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO'S ECONOMIC MANagers are preparing to meet with Catholic bishops to seek their help in ensuring that the poor benefit from the 12-percent value-added tax (VAT) on oil.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) on Monday called on Malacañang to review the laws on VAT and oil deregulation, which it said were pushing up prices and adversely affecting the poor.

The government expects to collect P87 billion this year from the VAT on oil and an additional P15 billion in a month of the soaring oil prices.

The President and her economic managers indicated the government was not about to give up the VAT on oil.

But Economic Planning Secretary Augusto Santos said

GOV'T ECONOMISTS A10

IMELDA MARCOS AT 79 A group of friends led by architect Gerry Contreras hosts a belated birthday party for former first lady Imelda Marcos at the Ganzon Plaza in Makati City on Monday. Marcos, who's now 79, spent her birthday itself on July 2 in her native Tacloban in the company of family and close friends from her glory days.

CBCP: Poor's bitterness rising

By Kristine L. Alave

WARNING TO THE ARROYO administration: A tide of bitterness and unrest is rising among the poor that, if unabated, can lead to chaos.

The warning was aired yesterday by members of the influential Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, who said the government should address the problem swiftly because the impoverished sector was becoming convinced that authorities were turning a blind eye to its plight.

"They are bitter in the sense that they feel things have not changed. There is no change in policy to help them. All they see is that the government gives out subsidies, but this is not helpful to all, and it will not last," Bishop

CBCP: POOR'S A10

Two options: Refloat or tow ship to shore

By Leila B. Salaverria and Norman Bordadora

TO REFLOAT OR TO TOW?

Vice Adm. Wilfredo Tamayo, chief of the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), yesterday said he had directed Sulpicio Lines Inc., operator of the MV Princess of the Stars, to refloat the capsized ferry.

Tamayo said the refloating should be done as soon as possible so as not to increase the risk that its toxic oil and

TWO OPTIONS A10

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Broken and thunderstorms with scattered showers and thunderstorms. The weather system will last early today it is from cloudy skies with isolated showers and thunderstorms.

Metro Manila	26-32 Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	26-32 Cloudy
Baguio	18-26 Cloudy	Cebu	26-32 Cloudy
Tuguegarao	24-34 Cloudy	Zamboanga	26-32 Cloudy
Laoag	24-34 Cloudy	Davao	26-32 Cloudy
Puerto Princesa	26-32 Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	26-32 Cloudy
Legazpi City	26-32 Cloudy	Surigao	26-32 Cloudy
Catarman	26-32 Cloudy	Tacloban	26-32 Cloudy

Second FRONTPAGE

SUERTRES

1st	2nd	3rd
6	9	5
6	9	5
4	4	6

6/42 LUZON/VIS-MIN

1	3	5	27	33	42

P12,880,432.80

POWERLOTTO 5/55+1/10

19	28	31	35	50	+	4

P50,000,000.00

Neri going to SSS, Palace says

By Michael Lim Ubac and Jerry E. Esplanada

ROMULO NERI, WHO HAS not even served a year as chair of the Commission on Higher Education (CHEd), has been named president and CEO of the Social Security System (SSS) following the reported resignation of SSS head Corazon de la Paz, according to Palace and CHEd sources.

According to CHEd insiders, Nona Ricafort, a CHEd commissioner, has been appointed to replace Neri. The CHEd insiders claimed that Ricafort's appointment papers were signed by President Macapagal-Arroyo before the Cabinet meeting yesterday.

Neri and Ricafort are to assume their new posts "right after the President's State of the Nation Address" on July 28, according to the same CHEd insiders.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita confirmed Neri's appointment, but not Ricafort's.

CHEd OIC

What he said was that Ricafort, being already an OIC[d], would "probably be appointed in some capacity as OIC. [officer in charge]...or to us acting secretary."

Ermita said Neri's appointment would be announced today.

"The reason I couldn't make the announcement earlier is out of respect for Cora de la Paz. I understand she's abused, but she should know that the President is going to appoint Secretary Neri. If I can't contain it for the end of last night, then I'm supposed to announce it officially [today]," said Ermita.

The secretary said he tried to contact De la Paz all day yesterday to no avail.

It comes as the SSS said De la Paz resigned last June 18, citing health reasons. She also said she wanted to spend time with her family, said the sources who asked not to be named.

De la Paz could not be reached for comment as she is supposed to be in Malaysia attending a conference.

GMA's judgment

Asked why Neri was being moved to the SSS, Ermita said: "So you know, the President has her reasons for it. You can be sure that these appointments are all based on a very good judgment by the President."

Ermita described Neri as "a good economist, good organizer and executive."

Neri earlier confirmed was denied the new appointment, saying in a text message, "Let's wait for the official announcement" by the Palace.

Ricafort similarly played coy in a phone interview yesterday, saying she did not want to preempt the Office of the President.

But last week, Ricafort said in an interview that she had a "99 percent chance" of being appointed CHEd chair.

She said this reporter would be the "first to know if I get the post."

No announcement was made about Neri's new appointment at the Cabinet meeting yesterday.

Instead, the President announced that the post of SSS president and administrator would be given Cabinet rank.

Under Administrative Order 310 that she issued yesterday, the President directed the programs of several departments—social welfare, health, Government Service Insurance System, SSS and other agencies dealing with social welfare—into a "national welfare program that directly addresses the impact of the adverse global environment."

The work of clustering shall be headed by the Administrator of the SSS, who shall be granted Cabinet rank," said the administrative order.

Whistleblower

Ricafort, who was appointed CHEd commissioner in 2005, was the commissioner who blew the whistle on the controversial P[illion]-million-[dollar] contract broadband network deal between the Philippine government and China's ZTE Corp., but then joined the crop of recording members of the President's official family who find themselves being ousted from one Cabinet post after another in a continuing "rigodon."

On July 4, Ermita announced the appointment of ex-senator Monina Zenia D. who lost in his senatorial bid in 2007, as head of the Dangerous Drugs Board.

Ermita said it was "highly probable" that other defeated administration senatorial bets—former senators Ralph Recto, Tessie Aquino-Oreta and Michael Defensor...would be given key positions in the administration.

It is rumored that Recto is being groomed to head the Neda, a post now occupied by an acting capacity by Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Augusto Santos.

Last last year, Neri conceded the project after a CHEd team of investigators confirmed reports of overpricing and irregularities in the bidding of the project, known as the Integrated Multitube Business Outsourcing Information Contact Centers (IMBOC-ICC).

The project is aimed at helping state universities and colleges, like the Polytechnic University of the Philippines, set up call center training laboratories.

Neri has expressed a preference for returning to his old post as director general of the National Economic and Development Authority, the country's economic planning agency.

It was the one post he "would be able to serve very well," he said in an earlier interview.

Nods to CHEd

But he said he was also open to serving in another position, like the finance portfolio.

In 2007, the President moved Neri from Neda to CHEd as part of a "lateral assignment from the President."

He said then that he intended to stay for only six months in CHEd, but **the President extended his term for** another six months.

Neri, who has been embroiled in the controversy surrounding the National Broadband Network contract with China's ZTE Corp., has then joined the crop of recording members of the President's official family who find themselves being ousted from one Cabinet post after another in a continuing "rigodon."

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NERI

DE LA PAZ

Suspects in Ces Drilon kidnapping are ARMM bets

By Alcuin Papa, Inquirer Mindanao, and Julie S. Alipala, Inquirer Manila news

CES DRILON

THE COMMISSION on Elections yesterday confirmed that Sahara, Sahi, Mayor Akmad Ismail, a supporter in the election of incumbent Ces Drilon and three others, is a candidate for governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) in the Aug. 11 elections.

The suspects were still unnamed, Datuk Ismail, meanwhile, is running for a seat in the 7th member ARMM Regional Legislative Assembly representing Sulu, according to Comelec Executive Director Jose Tolentino.

"Based on the law, you can only be prosecuted from running if you have been convicted by final judgment," Tolentino explained on reporters at Camp Crame where the bandits are being held.

Police have filed kidnapping for ransom charges against Indanan and one in the abduction of Drilon, ABS-CBN news cameraman Jimmy Encomienda and Angelo Valderama, and professor Octavio Dinampo of Mindanao State University on June 8.

Vote on election day

Tolentino said he did not know if the suspects had been granted permission to leave detention to campaign. They have been held in Crame since June 17, immediately after the captives were released.

As for being allowed to vote on election day Tolentino said the bandits would have to petition the Comelec for permission.

The bandits, who negotiated with the abductees of Drilon and the others for their freedom, became suspects after photos and text messages surfaced indicating their possible involvement in the kidnapping. They were also accused of pocketing P6 million of the P9-million ransom payment paid for the hostages' release.

Bandits have denied the charges.

Insisting on innocence

Dimampo, in a phone interview in Manila yesterday, continued to insist the bandits were innocent.

"For speaking about my truthful conviction on the innocence of the bandits, I am now considered a suspect," said Dimampo, alluding to the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group's pronouncement it would scrutinize his latest supplemental affidavit to see if he might be included in the charges filed.

Dimampo said he would have made a better stab without that guide, Jumalil Ajirae, who led them to the kidnappers.

"But no one has taken steps to contact me or inform me of any preliminary hearings. I have been left out despite the fact I am one of the victims here," he said.

For profit

Ajirae has claimed the bandits provided him to work for Drilon to get her interview so they could kidnap her and profit from it.

But Dimampo said Mayor Ismail only came into the picture two days after the kidnapping, and he had argued with the kidnappers over the phone.

"Justice for me should not include victimizing the bandits. We were held hostage for 10 days ... but the bandits have been detained for 21 days now," he said.

Pursuit operations

He said that instead of the bandits, the authorities should be going after the kidnappers and Ajirae.

ARMM police commander Chief Supt. Joel Goltiao, coincidentally, announced yesterday pursuit operations against the kidnappers would continue even during the election period.

"The operations are continuing until all the suspects are accounted for (and) neutralized. There will be no suspension, even during the elections, unless there is an order from competent authorities," Goltiao said.

Court wants evidence of Jocjoc link to bank accounts

By Margaux C. Ortiz

THE COURT OF APPEALS WANTS to see the evidence linking 70 accounts in 17 banks and insurance firms to a multibillion-peso fertilizer fund scam allegedly pulled off by agriculture undersecretary Jocelyn "Jocjoc" Bolante before it decides on government's request to extend a freeze order.

The court's 20-day freeze order will expire on July 21.

Bolante's lawyer, Antonio Zaballero, charged that there was no legal basis for the freeze order and asked the court to lift it.

Presiding Justice Conrado Vasquez Jr. of the appellate court's first division yesterday gave the Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC) and the Office of the Solicitor General seven days to submit their proof.

The court said the evidence would enable them to determine whether or not to extend the freeze order for six more months, as requested by the OSG.

Zaballero, was given 10 days to submit his own memorandum.

"This may go beyond the 20-day freeze order, but we will try to resolve the case as or before the expiration date," Vasquez said.

OSG representative Cristina Lim asked the court to extend the freeze order, claiming the accounts were related to the controversial fertilizer fund scam.

AMLC lawyer Julie Abad, on the other hand, asked for a six-month extension of the freeze order.

"We need six months to complete the investigation because the case involves voluminous and complex transactions," Abad said.

"Due to banking technology, it is possible to make expeditious transactions and withdraw the money (should the order be lifted)," Lim said.

"The purpose of our request is also to find additional accounts and to give an ample time to finalize to prepare for the filing of money laundering charges," Lim said.

"It appears that the issuance of the petition stemmed from 12 suspicious transactions in 2006 involving the Livelihood Corp. of which my client was once chair," Zaballero said.

Zaballero pointed out, "To the best of my knowledge, (Bolante) was no longer chair of the corporation at that time."

Gupitin at gamitin pambili ng inyong bagong SUZUKI na motor.

A Time to Reflect:

DESPITE THE WORSENING OIL AND FOOD CRISIS, THERE IS HOPE

As a nation and as a people, we have seen and endured many crises. Each time, we overcame the crisis.

Today, again, we are faced with a crisis. This one though is unprecedented in its scale and severity. Food supplies are at their lowest in 30 years. Food prices are at their highest ever. Making the food crisis worse is the rapid rise in the price of crude oil.

We must not lose hope that we will once again overcome adversity.

The **International Monetary Fund says** that, "Rocketing oil and food prices are increasingly felt around the globe and surging commodity prices could worsen poverty in many poor countries. If food prices rise further and oil prices stay the same, some governments will no longer be able to feed their people and at the same time maintain stability in their economies."

Governments around the world are moving as they realize that they have to reach out and help those who are marginalized to alleviate their suffering to prevent social unrest.

IT IS URGENT THUS THAT THE GOVERNMENT COMES OUT WITH A DO-ABLE ECONOMIC REHAB, RESCUE, AND RECOVERY PLAN FOR OUR PEOPLE

COPW MAKES THE FOLLOWING PROPOSALS TO HELP THE POOR:

- **Stagger increases in the price of diesel** at the rate of P2 per week until the P16 under-recovery of the oil companies is covered.
- **Subsidize the consumption of the very poor.** Government's windfall profits from the VAT on petroleum products can help subsidize the poor's consumption of electricity, LPG, and purchases of basic goods to cushion them from the domino effect of the increase in transport fares and protect them from worsening poverty.
- **Removal of the VAT from life line rate electricity users.** COPW recommends that the 1.64 million depressed families who consume from 50 kWh to 100 kWh in the lifeline electricity program be exempted from the 12% VAT on the purchase of ONE 11-kg LPG tank per month. The cost of the subsidy is P125 million monthly and can be sourced from the royalties from Malampaya.
- **Expand the rice entitlement of the marginalized poor.** Civic organizations, religious communities and above all, business firms must do their share to help.

UNDER RECOVERIES IN DIESEL AND TRANSPORT FARE HIKE

- **As of July 5, 2008, the average pump price of DIESEL at the gas stations was at P54.48 per liter. The oil companies have to recover their losses based on the difference between the pump price and their cost to produce. P16 is what they need to recover and when added to the present P54.48 price per liter, you can expect diesel price to rise to P70.48 per liter.**
- The **COPW** position, made known at the LTFRB public hearing, is for STAGGERED price increases. This position has also been conveyed to Energy Secretary Angelo Reyes.
- The P16 under-recovery can be recovered over a two-month period at the rate of P2 per liter increase per week. This should soften the shock of record high diesel prices.

RICE FOR THE MARGINALIZED POOR

- **COPW** is working closely with the DSWD-Ahon Pamilyang Pinoy Program in **Pasay City** in **37 barangays or 17,490 depressed families.**
- They are entitled to **7 kilos of NFA rice a week at P18.25 a kilo or P127.75 weekly** Land Bank Access Card.
- **COPW urges business, civic organizations, religious communities and congregations to "Adopt a Barangay."**

SUBSIDY ON BASIC COMMODITIES

COPW urgently calls on DTI Secretary Peter B. Favila to **convene a meeting of the National Price Coordinating Council (NPCC) and all the stakeholders to find out the extent of the price increases (especially for the months of July and August)** because of the following:

- The continuing increase in oil prices has a domino effect on basic commodities such as rice, wheat, corn, sugar, canned goods, as well as on steel, tinplates, cement and other construction materials.
- The VAT windfall can be used to subsidize the poor's purchases of basic commodities whose rise in costs is passed on in higher prices of basic goods.
- For food processors, agricultural producers, livestock and millers whose inventories were already exhausted as of June 30th, we expect price increases in July and August as they will recover the higher cost of production.
- Once the price increases are known, then government shall allocate subsidies from its windfall income from the VAT on petroleum products.

THERE IS LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

COPW expects prices of oil and basic commodities to continue to increase some more in July to September. **But they will level off in October when the costs of under recoveries have been recovered. Hopefully, by that time, the subsidies can be reduced or suspended.**

COPW urges immediate action to be taken rather than amending the VAT which will take time to revise and will require 2/3 vote by the House and Senate.

COPW appeals to the President to exercise political will to address the problems faced by our country while adhering to the principles of transparency, accountability, and good governance.

COPW also appeals to the Private Sector to help refine and facilitate the implementation of the solutions.

For online posting of COPW issues, log on to http://groups.yahoo.com/group/COPW/

COPW CONSUMER & OIL PRICE WATCH
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RAUL T. CONCEPCION
Chairman

We will appreciate getting feedback from you.
Text 0917-8103363 if you agree or have any comments on the COPW position. Thank you.

Mother of abducted sisters hale AFP to court

THE MOTHER OF THE ALLEGEDLY KIDnapped sisters, Rose Aros and Fatima Gumanoy, yesterday filed a petition for a writ of habeas corpus with the Court of Appeals after military officials in Fort Bonifacio allegedly barred her from seeing and getting back her daughters.

"My daughters are being held at the Fort Bonifacio General Hospital for unexplained medical concerns. Their doctor said they cannot be discharged after a week," Marla Gumanoy said in a statement.

Edwin Casete, secretary general of the Karapatan rights alliance group, said the sisters were being detained after their abduction and were being forced to cooperate "if they wished their lives to be spared."

"The AFP should give them back to their mother who is already claiming custody of them, especially Fatima, who is still a minor," she said.

Marla Gumanoy said there was no reason for her daughters to stay that long in hospital.

"Rose Ann's wound was healing and Fatima was in a good condition [until] before they were abducted," she said.

The mother said that she was shocked when she saw her daughters Fatima on July 5, lying in bed and completely immobile.

She insisted on being allowed to take Fatima to another hospital but the military refused.

Karapatan has maintained that the sisters, daughters of a labor peasant leader, did not seek "voluntary custody" but were taken forcibly by government agents.

When Karapatan first reported the abduction of Rose Ann and Fatima last week, the Armed Forces accused it of staging a "propaganda stunt."

The military said the girls sought "voluntary custody" after "running away from their Karapatan custodian."

Karapatan spokesperson Ruth Cervantes accused the military of lying, saying the Intelligence Service of the AFP (Isafp) initially claimed that the girls were not under military custody.

"But a few days later, they surfaced the girls, claiming that they sought voluntary custody," she said.

The Gumanoy sisters were supposed to be meeting their mother at a mall in Alabang, Muntinlupa, last Thursday, but they failed to show up at the meeting place.

Rose Anne, a suspected member of the New People's Army, was arrested last April 13 after she was wounded in an encounter with the Army's 16th Infantry Battalion in General Nakar, Quezon.

She was confined at the AFP Medical Center for a few months until May 28 when she was allowed to post bail by the Infanta regional trial court, where she faces rebellion charges.

The military claimed that Rose Anne "ran away" from Karapatan, which they accuse of being a leftist front, and sought refuge among the soldiers she befriended when she was being treated at the military hospital.

"Why would they be scared of Karapatan? We are not the military. We do not have guns," Cervantes said.

She Cortes of the National Union of Peoples' Lawyers, who is representing the sisters, said Fatima was a minor and there was no basis for her arrest.

Jhaegaan C. Ortiz with a report from Jocelyn R. Uy

Correction

IN THE JULY 8 ISSUE, an article on Page A2... "Palace: Ojo ni Gutierrez no name cost it cop slot"—misstated the first name of a former justice secretary. The former justice secretary's name is Hernando—not Hermani—Perez.

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors or writing to the Inq Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Makoy[illegible], Makati City, fax this 897-8710/893-1444, e-mail address: inq-desk@inquirer.com.ph.

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QC court still too busy to arraign Adaza et al.

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By Marlon Ramos

A QUEZON CITY COURT IS LIKELY TO schedule next month the arraignment of former intelligence Metsenbrun Adaza and five former military and police officers who are charged with plotting to topple the government.

Quezon City Judge Samuel Gaerlan's schedule for July is already full, said a member of his staff who asked not to be named as she was not authorized to talk with the media.

"Considering the documents about the case had just been brought here and Judge Gaerlan has yet to read it, the arraignment will probably be held in August," the court employee said.

But Gaerlan may well have the date of the arraignment on Wednesday, the court employee said.

The case, docketed as criminal case Q-08-152808 was raffled off to Gaerlan who has received the complaint sheet against Adaza and his coaccused, including retired Marine Col. Cesar de la Peña, former Army Col. Ernie Amboy, former Lt. Col. Deandres Maquilo and former Sups. Rafael Candelita.

Aside from the five, a certain Col. Edgardo Tayko, who remains at large, and other "John and Jane Does" are also charged with violating Article 136, or "proposal to commit coup d'etat," of the Revised Penal Code.

Adaza, Amboy and De la Peña have posted bail and were released from police custody over the weekend.

Maquilo has yet to post bail while Candelita is being held at the 12-hour interrogation and detention Group (CIDG) detention cell in Camp Crame for a murder case. Candelita had gone into hiding after he was accused of being behind the killing of newsman Edgar Damalerio Cervantes.

Adaza and the others were separately charged with "obstruction of justice/harboring a fugitive" after they were arrested.

Candelita was also charged with violating Article 178, or "using fictitious name/concealing true name," of the Revised Penal Code, after he identified himself as "Randy Marbella" when CIDG agents arrested them last week.

The case stemmed from a complaint of lawyer Raymund Fortun who went to the CIDG after Adaza and his coaccused allegedly demanded $4 million (about P170 million) from his client, Mexmicel Salicana, to finance a coup to oust President Macapagal-Arroyo in exchange for Davao "boys the new government."

Adaza and the other accused were arrested last July 2 in an entrapment operation while they were allegedly trying to extort money from Salicana's associate, Jeanne Marie Laurilla, inside a room at the Crown Plaza Hotel in the Ortigas business district in Pasig.

Writing workshop in Baguio

THE BAGUIO WRITERS Group and Baguio Country Club will cosponsor a free literature writing workshop for students on July 13 and 20, 9:30 a.m.–5 p.m., at the Pine Room of the club on South Drive, Baguio City.

Panelists are Dr. Peterelli and Fenaris Manansalan, Prof. Grace Subido and Luz B. Maronan.

The confirmed fellows for this workshop are Cheleu Yale, Chiree Palotero, Bona Dagohoy-os, Ashley Lanaja, Rachel Pelonggo, Sacha Perggos and Yukio Cayanga.

There are five slots still available for participants from the Baguio-Benguet area. Genre to be discussed are poetry, fiction and creative nonfiction in English and Filipino.

Asean launches drive vs child-sex tourism

By Cynthia G. Balana

TOURISTS LOOKing for underage sex will find it hard to do so in member-countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations after Asean launched Monday a campaign against child sex in regional tourist destinations.

The Asean Region of Education Campaign, which is supported financially by Australia, is called "Please Protect our Tourism Treasures." It was launched at Sofitel Hotel in Pasay City with over 200 participants representing regional businesses in attendance.

The campaign encourages tourists and locals to protect the children in tourist destinations—in the Philippines by calling national hotline No. 0919-7777777—to give information on child-sex crimes or report suspicious behavior by adults around children.

No safe haven

Australia's Ambassador to the Philippines Tod Smith stressed the need to protect children from abusive and irresponsible tourists.

"It is imperative that we safeguard our children and the region's tourism industry from child-sex tourism. A joint effort between the private and public sectors will send a strong message that there is no safe haven for child-sex offenders in Southeast Asia," Smith said.

Nicholas Imoh Dawson, Asean deputy secretary general, said, "Children are our most precious treasures. Group Worldwide has donated its expertise to develop the Asean Regional Education Campaign. We welcome the support of other businesses in investing for a safe future for the children in the region."

Jenny Dodds from Child Wise, a leading Australian child protection organization, said child protection was everyone's responsibility.

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29 victims of trafficking back in RP

CLARE THOMSON —At least 23 Filipino women and two teens victimized by a trafficking syndicate in Malaysia in the last three to six months have been repatriated to the Philippines via the Iloilo-based Mandurriao International Airport here.

The women, most of them in their 20s, arrived on board Air Asia's 4K 33 flight on Sunday.

Immigration officials, social workers and airport security secured their media interviews. The women were taken to the board room of the Iloilo International Airport Corp. (IIAC) for immediate debriefing.

IIAC president Victory Jose Luciano said five of the women boarded flights in Malaysia from IMM. The others left through Marina International Airport and Miaray Sepang International Airport. Some left through Zamboanga City.

Six of them were brought into protective custody, Luciano said.

Immediate measures agreed to take actions against the recruiter who has yet to be arrested by the police or Bureau of Immigration personnel, he said.

The women were the biggest batch of repatriated victims of human trafficking, he said. Head Inspector Cristina Lucero

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By Leila B. Salaverria

YOU CAN'T ORDER THESE shoes in Jollibee.

Having consumers worry unlikely to be confused by footwear with the "Jollibee" mark, the Court of Appeals overturned a decision barring the upholding the guilt and imprisonment of a businessman for violation of the intellectual property code.

The popular fast food snack house Jollibee Food sued Richland Chua for using a logo that looked very similar to the logo and box used in word. Chua was sentenced to five years imprisonment last November.

The appellate court ordered the shoe salesman freed, saying the Jollibee fast food chain, which sells hamburgers, fried chicken and other fast food items, could not claim that "Jollibee" footwear was misleading to buyers.

Chua had filed a motion asked the appellate court to reconsider its earlier ruling.

Granting Chua's plea, the court said ordinary buyers would not easily be misled into thinking that the "Jollibee" footwear was the product of the ubiquitous Jollibee fast food chain.

'Non-competing'

According to the June 23 decision penned by Justice Lucas Bersamin, the products sold by Chua and by Jollibee were "totally unrelated and non-competing."

Jollibee's products are only sold in its outlets, while Chua's products can only be bought in supermarkets and in Asia Lions Footwear in Manila, it added.

The appellate court noted that the Intellectual Property Code states that the right to exclusive use of a trademark is limited to the goods or services to which the trademark was registered.

The trial, it said, should be confined to the issue of whether Chua's footwear was the product of the allegations Jollibee fast food chain.

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Earthquake jolts Luzon

AN EARTHQUAKE JOLTED Aurora province, parts of Metro Manila, northern and eastern of Luzon and southern Tagalog yesterday morning.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said the earthquake happened at 9:06 a.m. It had a magnitude of 5.4 and its epicenter was 181 kilometers southeast of Baler in Aurora.

The earthquake was felt with intensity 4 in Baler, Quezon City, Manila and Cabanatuan in Nueva Ecija.

Intensity 3 was felt in Infanta in Pangasinan, Baguio City, Santiago City in Isabela, Ground Saber in Quezon, Iriga City in Camarines Sur, Tuguegarao in Cagayan, Virac in Catanduanes, Legazpi City in Albay, Masbate City in Masbate, Roxas City in Capiz, Kalibo in Aklan, Iloilo City, Bacolod City in Negros Occidental, Tacloban City in Leyte, Surigao City in Surigao del Norte, Cagayan de Oro City in Misamis Oriental, Butuan City in Agusan del Norte, Davao City in Davao del Sur, Koronadal in South Cotabato, Cotabato City in Maguindanao, Zamboanga City in Zamboanga del Sur and Jolo in Sulu.

Intensity 2 was felt in Dagupan City in Pangasinan, Baguio City, Santiago City in Isabela, Ground Saber in Quezon, Iriga City in Camarines Sur, Tuguegarao in Cagayan, Virac in Catanduanes, Legazpi City in Albay, Masbate City in Masbate, Roxas City in Capiz, Kalibo in Aklan, Iloilo City, Bacolod City in Negros Occidental, Tacloban City in Leyte, Surigao City in Surigao del Norte, Cagayan de Oro City in Misamis Oriental, Butuan City in Agusan del Norte, Davao City in Davao del Sur, Koronadal in South Cotabato, Cotabato City in Maguindanao, Zamboanga City in Zamboanga del Sur and Jolo in Sulu.

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SC tells appeals court to hear pastor's plea

By Lala B. Saloreria

THE SUPREME COURT HAS DIRECTED the Court of Appeals to hear the petition of a detained Protestant pastor who had allegedly had his son tortured by police and charged with murder without basis.

Pastor Berlie Guerrero of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, joined by farmer Sen. Jovito Salonga, among others, had sought the high court's help to overturn his release and stop court proceedings on what he claimed was a baseless murder charge.

The high tribunal said the allegations raised in the pleading contained issues of facts that it would not take cognizance of because it was not "a trier of facts."

But instead of dismissing Guerrero's plea, the high court said it should be brought to the appellate court, considering the gravity of his allegations.

"In view of the seriousness of the allegations of the violations of the liberty and dignity of a citizen who is said to be under detention, and in order that this case be acted upon with dispatch, the Court, instead of dismissing this petition outright, hereby resolves to transmit the case to the Court of Appeals," it said in an en banc resolution released last month.

Guerrero was allegedly abducted on May 27, 2007 and tortured by men in civilian clothes. Later, he was informed by police that he had been arrested for the murder of a certain Neil Dano.

No probable cause

He petitioned the Bataan, Cavite regional trial court to have the charge against him dismissed, but his motion was denied, prompting him to run to the high court for help.

In the petition filed with the Supreme Court, Guerrero, with Salonga as well as other church groups and a Catholic Bishop, said there was no probable cause to try the accused for Dano's death.

The petition said Guerrero was never informed of the charges against him and that the witness who had implicated him never appeared before the judge who had conducted the preliminary investigation.

It also said the RTC disregarded the facts. It pointed out that during the preliminary investigation, the judge had stated that without the testimony and examination of the eyewitness, whom the acknowledged of failing to examine, there would be nothing to link the pastor to the alleged murder.

But the judge still allowed the murder charge to be filed, the petition said.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Wednesday, July 9, 2008
14th Week in Ordinary Time
Augustinian Zone Recoll

1st Reading: Hos 10:1-3, 7-8, 12
Gospel: Mt 10:1-7

Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority over the unclean spirits to drive them out and to heal every disease and infirmity.

These are the names of the twelve apostles: first Simon, called Peter, and his brother Andrew; James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew, the tax collector; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus; Simon, the Cananaite, and Judas Iscariot, the man who would betray him.

Jesus sent these twelve on mission with the instructions: "Do not visit pagan territory and do not enter a Samaritan town. Go instead to the lost sheep of the people of Israel.

"As you go, proclaim the message: the kingdom of heaven is near.'

Comment/story

The apostles charged with the task of proclaiming who Kingdom were not all of the same mold. Some were fishermen and another was a tax collector. Some were learned and others were simple. Some were zealots for political change, others were young and still learning their ways.

Jesus called each of the apostles for a reason, just as He has a purpose for calling each of us in our own way, using the gifts that God has given to us, we all have a unique role to play in the proclamation of the Kingdom of God.

Clarissa Limmongkuan Kondracki, Ms. of Religious of Virgin Mission, Claret City, OPRM, Bro. Al Dalmacio Cecil Quezon City, Ph. No. (02) 411-2000 Fax No. (02) 412-0128, e-mail: claretcity.org, Website: http://www.claretcity.org Claretian Publications & http://claretpublications.org Claretian Publications is the Philippine Claretian apostolate publishing house. Claret Avenue Blvd., Santo Niño, Quezon City. E-mail: logos@claretcity.org (logos.inquirer.net@gmail.com)

Sulpicio sues Del Monte over toxic cargo

By Allison W. Lopez
and Amy R. Remo

AFTER SUING THE WEATHER bureau, Sulpicio Lines Inc.—owner of the typhoon-wrecked MV Princess of the Stars—yesterday turned its legal guns on yet another party: Del Monte Philippines, the shipper of the tuna-packed, fire-ridden.

Claiming P13 million in damages, Sulpicio Lines accused Del Monte, among others, of breaching cargo rules by allegedly hiding the true nature of the perishable shipment.

Rescue operations have been halted after authorities learned the ship was carrying 10,000 kg of undeclared.

In its complaint, Sulpicio Lines claimed Del Monte breached the terms and conditions in the Bill of Lading (the contract between the shipper and shipping line) by only indicating "800 Box Bumblebee, Technical 94% Min," which was four classified as regular cargo.

The shipping company alleged it was verbally informed by Del Monte that the shipment was "just tuna," as it was loaded on the MV Princess of the Stars—which would have earlier than another Sulpicio Liner, on May 20 bound for Davao—to accommodate Del Monte's request.

But on June 25, Sulpicio Lines said it received a letter from Del Monte and then it learned for the first time that the undeclared shipment was actually a "toxic substance and a marine pollutant."

The listed complainants in the suit were Sulpicio Lines and its vice president for marketing, Jordan Go.

In a phone interview, Del Monte general manager Gilo Alejandro said the company had not received a copy yet of the lawsuit.

"We will respond accordingly if and when we receive it," he said.

Alejandro said Del Monte was ready to present evidence today before the Board of Marine Inquiry to prove it properly declared the cargo.

In a previous statement, Del Monte claimed that without its knowledge and consent, Sulpicio Lines loaded the undeclared items the Princess of the Stars, instead of on the Princess of Paradise, the supposed appointed vessel for the cargo.

Del Monte said Sulpicio Lines, had been fully apprised of the nature of the cargo because all required documents were submitted, including the material safety data sheet from the supplier.

Sulpicio Lines has also filed a P4.2-million damage suit against the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa). It said Pagasa failed to immediately report that the typhoon had changed course, causing the Princess of the Stars to sail into the storm.

2 BMI probers quit Sulpicio inquiry with guns blazing

Front page A-1

Reglional Trial Court to stop the BMI inquiry—claiming, among other things, that it has not authority to investigate commercial shipping fires because the law has been transferred to the Maritime Industry Authority (Marina) under a 2004 law.

The court has yet to issue a requested temporary restraining order.

The Sulpicio Lines' ocean vessel capsized off Sibuyan Island, Romblon, at the height of Typhoon "Frank" on June 21 while en route from Manila to Cebu with more than 800 people on board.

Rosalito, who earlier said it was "obvious" that the Princess of the Seas sailed without the proper issuance of ballast and that informing the ship may not have been reasonable, said the records would show that he had warned Sulpicio Lines of ignoring their plight and say they are planning to file a class action suit.

Joseph Solante, 47, whose son, Jerry Joseph, was among those aboard the ferry said the seamen "were playing with our emotions" and refusing to extend help.

"A representative from Sulpicio Lines had called me to tell me my son has been found alive, only to call back hours later to tell me their information was wrong," Solante told Agence France Presse.

"My wife is inconsolable. She has had little sleep since the accident."

Solante said he would join the lawsuit against Sulpicio being mulled by the relatives of those who perished.

"Sulpicio should be made to pay," he said.

Only 56 people survived the disaster. More than 200 bodies have been recovered, but the rest are declared unaccounted for. Hundreds of them were trapped inside the upturned vessel.

5 more bodies washed ashore

On Monday, three decomposing male bodies believed to have come from the ferry disaster were washed ashore in Pagsanjahan in San Francisco, Quezon, according to Councilor Jess Abes. Two of the bodies were identified from Tita cards found in their wallets as Abde la Cruz and Niel Tadda.

Two other corpses were found and later buried in the nearby village of Nakalaya.

Sulpicio Lines has figured in some of the Philippines' worst sea disasters, including the 1987 collision between its ferry Dona Cecilia and a small oil tanker. More than 4,000 were killed in the disaster, but the company was absolved of any criminal liability.

Sulpicio sues Del Monte over toxic cargo

Front page A-1

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PCG asked to produce lone officer who cleared ship

Front page A-1

lone inspector at the resumption of the inquiry next week.

Malaysian Rep. Hua Hua Hooyee was himself surprised when PCG officials scheduled to participate in oversight or inspection.

"Why did only one person board the vessel to inspect?" she asked. "Was he all-knowing? Could he inspect a ship stacking in 15 minutes?"

"Only one person inspected a [seaworthy] ship and gave it the clearance to sail away," Pangalangan Rep. Eduardo Zialcita said during the hearing jointly conducted with the committee on oversight.

"I'd like to insist that person send his name questions."

Super body planned

At the end of the hearing, Pimentel—who as committee chairman could come up with a measure creating a "super body" to regulate "all stakeholders in the maritime industry."

"I would have my way I would revoke Sulpicio Lines's franchise right away and I suspect we some of 20 officials in jail," he told the lawmakers after the hearing.

The lawmaker also warned during the hearing that the sinking of the Princess of the Seas was not the only maritime disaster that had struck Sulpicio Lines.

Congress to decide franchises?

"You've had four vessels—and I'm not saying anyone—deliberately set out a solid word, one of which was the Doña Ria tragedy where in 4,000 lives were lost," he said, referring to the 1987 collision with an oil tanker, which has been considered history's worst peacetime maritime disaster.

Zialcita rendered suggestions to have Congress—not the executive—enforce safety franchises in shipping companies.

Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman seconded with assertion that it was "more difficult to acquire a motor's permit than a ship-sailing franchise."

Congressmen did not buy the assertion of Edgaro Rua, Sulpicio Lines vice president, that previously blamed the still-missing ship captain and the government's weather bureau for the tragedy.

They wanted to know why the company did not order the captain to sail for safety or even postpone the voyage given the weather conditions before the incident.

Advise or order?

Maritime law states that required shipping companies to advise "extraordinary diligence" in ensuring the safety of passengers and goods.

He said companies should also consider their vessels while in voyage and not leave everything to the ship masters.

"How do you reconcile now your giving to us the records, who might have an erroneous judgment, versus your express, ability under the law?" he asked.

Go replied: "The safety of the passengers is our priority concern, life would advise the captain to bring the ship to a certain place to avoid any accident."

"You will just advise, not issue any order?" Bunye retorted. "Advise, you give a suggestion," the Malolos congressman answered.

Told by the lawmaker that there was a difference between giving advice and an order, Go said the company would eventually "make the order ... if there's imminent danger."

Two options: Refloat or tow ship to shore

Front page A-1

for cargo would contaminate the surrounding waters.

Transportation Undersecretary Efren Carlos told the Senate committee on oversight yesterday that Sulpicio Lines had given a verbal commitment that it would remain responsible on what to do with the capsized vessel, the Doña Aurora, as its cargo hold, its fuel and the bodies of the victims still on the vessel.

"Based on the Sulpicio report this morning, Doña Aurora is in just one the vessel in the shore to get the Romblon main inlet out, get the fuel out and get the people out," Bautista said.

"The presence of bodies trapped inside the ferry when it capsized with some 800 people aboard during eruptions on June 21 is one of the factors to be considered when a decision is taken to refloat the 23,000-ton ship, said Sulpicio Lines' lawyer Victoria Lim Florido.

Florido told reporters that Sulpicio Lines wanted to ensure those the bodies would not be destroyed in the process. "We want to do it as humanely as possible, in such as possible, we don't want to harm the bodies inside," she said.

The lawyer also said Sulpicio Lines wanted to ensure that divers who would conduct the refloating would be trained are before the operation is commenced.

Ferry's fate up to insurer

Other factors to be considered are the position of the ship, the fact that it is resting on a reef and the presence of cargo such as the toxic substance malathion, according to Florido. Recovery of the malathion cargo has prompt-

ed authorities to suspend retrieval of the bodies inside the vessel.

Florido said that the ferry's insurer had to participate in talks about the fate of the ship because only the insurer has the authority to abandonment of the vessel.

"That's a declaration; we say part that the insured object, in the case the hull and machinery, is a total loss and we are transferring all of our rights and our causes of action to the insurer," she said. "That's why we have to include the insurer to talks about refloating."

Towing more practical

Ibrahim, head of the geocentrum task force on the salvage, said that one option placed the ship under tow instead of refloating it. She did not give an estimate on the cost of towing the vessel to shore but she reckoned that it would be less.

"I think that will be more cost effective, more practical, because that can be done maybe within a month as compared to refloating which will probably take three months," Ibrahim said.

She said she had been advised by Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez to get a written undertaking from Sulpicio Lines that it would not turn over it its responsibility regarding the shipwreck.

She said prior consultation is in store with representatives of Sulpicio Lines, Ordered Insurance and the appointed salvor to discuss details of the plan.

Ibrahim said she had spoken with experts on what to do with the derelict in light of the camp policy standard for salvage operations.

"What I spoke with the experts regarding the Malvolios pros-

ess, they said there are three ways to salvage the ship," she said.

"First is to really pull the vessel to shore and do everything that needs to be done, whatever requirements to be done. Second is to refloat it from where it is right now, which will be very costly and which will take a few months since the vessel is upside down. Third is to pull the vessel toward the deeper part of the sea and turn it right side up," Ibrahim said.

Oil spill boom

At San Fernando—to discuss labor, Lt. Cmdr. Rafael Bellos of the PCG's oil spill response team said towing the ferry to shore would not cause an oil spill because the vessel's bunker fuel was contained in the service fuel and leakage was not possible.

According to records, he said, the Princess of the Seas was carry-

ing 250,000 liters of bunker fuel.

"Only the oil in the base tank could leak but its effect is minimal," Bellos said, noting that the PCG had already placed an oil spill boom around the ship to prevent and contain a possible spillage.

He added that he had not seen the salvage plan so he could not say if towing could prevent the leakage of main tanks.

Coconut husks to absorb oil spill

Sen. Fernando Mayor Manuel Tamargo said she had directed villagers to gather coconut husks so they can have an organic oil spill boom to use.

The PCG executive conducted a demonstration among village chiefs and community leaders on how to make absorbent pads out of coconut husks. With a report if ser. Nikki Cerbatte Calleja, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Cadiz, Legazpi feasts prove fish safe to eat

Front page A-1

Some 300 kilos of seafood served at a 50-course long table disappeared in 10 minutes as a thousand people shared a free lunch hosted by the Cadiz City government on Monday in order the public that it was safe to eat seafood.

Although there were plenty of fish and other seafood products served at the "Libre ang Kapita, Kaliskis Kilaw Festival," in Cadiz at the Dr. Bernardo Rocamora Community Center, the city government was out of food.

Cadiz Mayor Salvador Escalante said the city government had prepared food for only 800 but more people came. "They devoured all the food and even brought home the leftovers (Cadiz) where the fish was placed."

Missing fishermen

The Cadiz fishing industry has been reeling from Typhoon "Frank" that sank many fishing vessels and claimed the deaths of 46 fishermen, with 47 still missing in the city.

And this has been aggravated by the fear that some of the fish may have eaten the remains of humans missing at sea, causing fish sales and prices to drop.

A convoy of fish from Cadiz brought to Cebu was reportedly brought back unsold.

To prove it is safe to eat fish, Escalante and the Cadiz fishing industry organized Mother's lunch.

Dr. Eric Tayag of the Holroyd Epidemiology Center earlier said it was safe to eat fish because most fish species are not carnivorous and, therefore, would not eat human flesh.

"Fish don't eat humans," Tayag said in a survey published in the Inquirer. "Most fish are small predators that digest fish prey on smaller fish or other marine animals," he added.

Cadiz City is the fishing center of Negros Occidental, with about 20 percent of its fish catch consumed locally. Eighty percent of its fish catch are shipped to Metro Manila and other major cities.

'Escabeche' in Bicol

Cadiz Vice Mayor Rommel Mirhan said fish sales in the city dropped by 60 percent and wholesale fish prices had also declined by 60 percent.

In Legazpi City, officials held a fish-eating event on Monday to show that fish caught in Bicol waters are safe for consumption.

Albay Gov. Joey Salceda also urged residents to believe in fish bodied in a pot of water and salt and eat refreshing lunganiza or fish cooked in soy sauce and black beans.

He was joined by mayors, councilors and even broadcasters, all in partaking of the locally sourced seafood cooked by residents and residents.

Salceda also announced that the Department of Agriculture had allotted P2 million to Albay province to boost ailing fisheries.

"Since people are afraid to eat seawater fish, we could produce more freshwater fish," he said in a mobile phone interview.

Fishfull economics

In Manila, some 20 members of the Sclerfolk Alliance Fisheworking Labor ng Bikolang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Bamalapi) held a protest rally yesterday at the entrance of the Department of Agriculture by cooking sticks of fish balls.

The mayor was to protest Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap's proposal to buy fish in Pampanga and promote frozen fish rolls over fish balls. Pamalakaya spokesperson Ginoy Allow Corpuz said in an interview.

Corpuz described the move as "very uncaring," adding that it was "fish ball, fish cake economics."

Corpuz said Pamalakaya said that a better, convincing way to

prove the safety of fish was to have government officials eat fish products in front of the media.

Other suggestions to help the fishing industry, he said, were free distribution of rice to all areas ravaged by the typhoon.

- A monthly oil subsidy of P7,500 for all fishermen operating small fishing boats.
- A monthly P3,000 economic subsidy for families of fishermen, as well as for those without boats and motorized gear.
- Free assistance to small fishermen whose motorized boats, nets and other fishing gear were destroyed by the typhoon.

In Lucena City, Pamalakaya warned on Monday that it would stage a nationwide fish strike against the government unless it stop the rising prices of petroleum products.

Meralco told to answer estafa complaint

By Margaux C. Ortiz

THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT HAS GIVEN officials of the Lopez-led Manila Electric Co. 15 working days to submit their counter-affidavits to a syndicated estafa complaint filed by members of the National Association of Electricity Consumers for Reforms (Nasecore).

The Meralco officials, led by chair Manuel Lopez and president Jesus Francisco, have until July 25 to submit their counter-affidavits, said regional state prosecutor Jaime Umpa.

They were earlier directed to appear at the DOJ yesterday but their lawyers, Manuel Lazaro and Miguel Damaso, said Lopez and Francisco received the subpoenas only last Thursday and asked for more time to draft their affidavits.

Lazaro also said that the complaint brought by Nasecore, a consumer watchdog group, was "not valid," but did not elaborate.

In a complaint filed last month, Nasecore said Meralco disclosed as income P887 million which it said belonged to its customers, representing part of the interest earned by the latter's meter and bill deposits held by Meralco. Consumers' deposits now total an estimated P55 billion.

In 1993, the Energy Regulatory Board, now regulator, increased the interest on consumers' deposits from 6 percent to 10 percent. Meralco then classified 6 percent of the interest under customers' deposits, and placed the remaining 4 percent under its operating revenues account. The 4 percent was later classified under the customers' deposits account.

Nasecore said that in its Dec. 31, 2008 financial statement, Meralco reclassified the 4-percent interest from the customers' deposits account to the "interest and other income account."

It said this constituted misappropriation because the interest on the customers' deposits was consumers' money being held in trust by Meralco, the group said.

Sotto launches 'war' vs dangerous drugs

By Jeannette I. Andrade

FORMER SEN. VICENTE "Tito" Sotto III yesterday formally took over the helm of the Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB) and other agencies involved in the crusade against illegal drugs, but said that as a "war machine" the agency needs fine tuning.

Amid criticisms that it was part of President Macapagal-Arroyo's political payback, Sotto accepted yesterday his appointment to the post and lashed out at critics, saying politics was out of the question when it came to the campaign against the drug menace.

In his speech during the turnover ceremonies held at the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) headquarters in Quezon City, Sotto emphasized that given the limitations of the DDB in terms of manpower and budget, "ballsye and persistence should not be in our dictionary."

He revealed that based on the report given to him by outgoing DDB chairman Anselmo Avenido, the agency has 187 personnel with an insufficient budget "who are supposed to enforce the laws of millions of regular and casual users and to shield 90 million more from the dangers of illegal drugs."

Tito's motto

Sotto assured that his enthusiasm in taking over the post will not be dampened by fault finders as he shared his personal motto: "Whatever you drink of me is none of my business. Today, I make this war against drugs my business. Gusto din ba' ng drugs, we will make you our business."

The campaign against illegal drugs, he said, is a war machine that needs economic motivation and patriotism in the fight against drug lords who have the help of the legislature, through Sen. Gregorio Honasan who chairs the congressional oversight committee on public order and dangerous drugs "we can fine-tune issues that need to be addressed."

In an interview after the rites, Sotto said reporters, "When it comes to the issue of illegal drugs, politics is out of the question" as he maintained that he would focus on addressing the drug menace and huddle down to work.

He added that if critics did not want political dim-wits appointed to government positions, they should seek a change in the Constitution.

Fitting successor

In his farewell speech, Avenido described Sotto as a fitting successor to the DDB chairmanship being the principal author of Republic Act 9165 or the Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002 and expressed certainty that the gains achieved by the agency during his stint would be sustained.

He said that since he assumed his post as the first full-time chairman of the DDB, under RA 9165 which created the agency, the policy-making body has delivered 128 landmark issuances that led to the successful implementation of the national anti-drug strategy and action plans.

As a result, he said the price of a gram of shabu from P2,000 in 2002 has tripled to its current street value of P6,500 per gram, which shows a dwindling in supplies of the illegal drug.

"The drug situation greatly improved. Boring our words, we have done our part and done it well," Avenido said.

He pointed out that Sotto's "experience as an anti-drug crusader and co-author of the dangerous drugs law will ensure a three-immeasurable in the improvement of the agency's capabilities, competency, and integrity towards achieving the vision of a drug-free country."

TURNOVER. Avenido (center), outgoing chairman of the Dangerous Drugs Board, shakes hands with his successor, former Sen. Tito Sotto, during yesterday's turnover ceremonies at the DDB. Watching at center is Sen. Gregorio Honasan, chairman of the Senate oversight committee on public order and dangerous drugs. LEO'M. JARIM

Maximized Multi-tasking Made Possible by HP's All-in-One Printers

Manila, Philippines, June 2008 - In today's fast-paced business world, more companies are demanding products that combine multiple functions. Gone are the days, for instance, when the sole purpose of printers was to print out documents. To integrate processes and boost productivity, they are now expected to perform other tasks as well. With this in mind, HP has come out with two printers that do just that.

Low-cost, high quality

The HP Officejet Pro L7380 All-in-One provides the perfect solution for those seeking to save themselves from the trouble of operating different equipment as well as from a cluttered office. Combining the functions of a printer, fax, scanner and copier, it eliminates the need to purchase the four machines separately. Also, its ability to print brilliant color photos and laser-quality text at a cost per page that is 50% lower than that of most lasers further helps you save money. Aside from cost-efficiency, the HP Officejet Pro L7380 is more than capable of providing high-quality printing results. Delivering printing speeds of up to 35 pages per minute (ppm) for black-and-white and 34 pages per minute for color, it is bound to give a boost to your productivity.

Practical but environment-friendly

Just like the L7380, the HP Officejet Pro L7590 All-in-One combines four functions-print, fax, scan and copy-in just one device. Along with this convenience, the series also offers numerous features that increase productivity. With a 50-sheet automatic document feeder and maximum printing speeds of up to 35 pages per minute for black and white and 34 pages per minute for color, you are sure to finish your most urgent printing tasks quickly. It also helps you cut costs by delivering up to 50% lower cost per page than comparable laser printers. Meanwhile, its built-in wired networking allows you to share a printer with multiple users. The HP Officejet Pro L7590 also proves to be environment-friendly. Along with its low energy consumption, it further helps you take care of the environment by cutting down paper consumption with its automatic two-sided printing.

Prices start at P17,890.00 for HP Officejet Pro L7590 and P15,690.00 for HP Officejet Pro L7380.

About HP

HP focuses on simplifying technology experiences for all of its customers - from individual consumers to the largest businesses. With a portfolio that spans printing, personal computing, software, services and IT infrastructure, HP is among the world's largest IT companies, with revenue totaling $91.6 billion for the four fiscal quarters ended April 30, 2008. More information about HP (NYSE: HPQ) is available at www.hp.com.

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

Mission impossible

EVEN AS PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO engages in political recycling by appointing losing candidates to her Cabinet, the Executive Branch finds itself in the embarrassing position of reaping a gigantic windfall from the escalating cost of oil. And so it has to lessen its belt while the rest of the population has to tighten theirs.

EDITORIAL

That is, if the administration were capable of feeling embarrassment at all. Instead, it revels in crimes-as-Jeepney drivers, the kind that embitters their vehicles with campaign-like "Kaisa ng Saudi," find the escalating cost of gas resulting in government proclaiming the joys of "Kaisa ng EVAT." The train of a driver's labor becomes identical, thanks to the clever sloganeering of the government's propagandists, to the stroke of luck that has turned monstrous misfortune for all into a golden opportunity for official revenue raising. Instead, a lucky few drivers will be gifted with cutesy gas-powered engines, though this will require them to toil into late, reaching a financial fertilizer for political gratitude, it does not address the fundamental need to restructure our essentially ad hoc public transport system.

To be sure, if officialdom enjoyed the trust and confidence of the public, the windfall from EVAT wouldn't be an issue. Our leaders could be relied upon by citizens to seize an opportunity to achieve long-postponed investments in basic infrastructure and to increase social safety nets.

But the public only sees government glooring over billions in additional revenues, while continuing its spendthrift ways with a token effort at ameliorating the plight of the poor from time to time. The escalating cost of gas hasn't resulted in a nationwide reduction in official caravans snailing their way through increasingly empty streets.

We do not see government identifying areas it can spend on to ameliorate the plight of ordinary Filipinos in order to grant them long-term relief. The poorest of the poor won't begrudge small tokens of official consideration, but we all know it's tokenism. Government must be dependable at arriving at clear, medium- and long-term solutions to practical problems. A single case in point: there has been no announcement that a few millions from the revenue windfall will be earmarked to purchase more carriages for the already nearly overloaded light-rail transit systems. No Chinese-style neighborhood bicycle facilities have been planned.

At the heart of this fiddling in the face of a global economic conflagration is the way our institutions have made presidential accountability virtually impossible.

In one, fundamental aspect, the past 18 years of our restored democracy has failed to exorcise the ghost of the dictatorship. Our presidents remain as unaccountable powerful, because they are dominant in terms of their control of the national budget, as Ferdinand Marcos was.

Marcos reversed the erosion of presidential powers and the corresponding assertion of Congress' power of the purse, which had taken place from the time of President Elpidio Quirino to that of President Diosdado Macapagal. He gave himself free rein over the budget, devising an opaque system of presidential slush funds, that made a mockery of the principle of accountability, and established a permanent veto over the legislature by reducing its budgetary powers to an existential virtual squabbling over tiny items that failed to affect the larger, presidentially determined, budgetary whole.

And so, the Marcos-era automatic appropriation for debt-servicing was restored, while the old social slush fund coming from the earnings of the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. and the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, disguised as the President's "social fund," remained debt-ridden presidential purview. Ms Arroyo's list also made it a habit to rubbish line the national government's budget proposal so as to front-load the new Congress has to deliberate on it. Through a combination of her veto power (which is almost impossible to overturn) and the automatic use of the old budget if Congress doesn't pass a new one, the present Constitution makes it impossible for any Congress to call any president's budgetary bluff.

True scrutiny? That's mission impossible.

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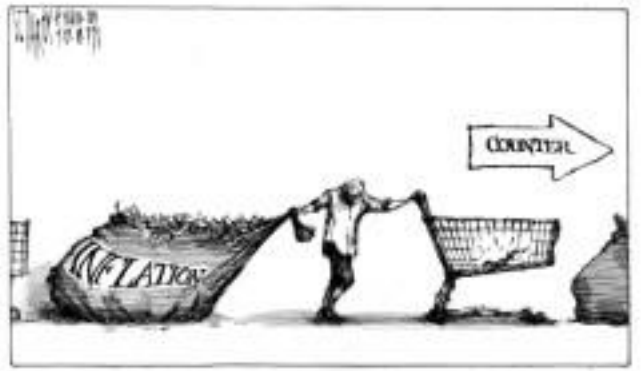

22 other sea vessels sunk by Typhoon 'Frank'

THE FOCUS OF MEDIA REPORTS ON THE passage of Typhoon "Frank" to the sinking of Sulpicio Lines' Princess of the Stars off Sibuyan Island, which overturned passenger and a deadly cargo of pesticide still be surrounded in the upended ship. Reported at unknown are at least 22 other big vessels that were hit at sea during the typhoon. So far, 44 have been confirmed dead and 69 still missing in those additional sinkings. There were the bodies washed ashore in Quezon and nearby islands who were at first thought to be passengers of Princess of the Stars but are now confirmed to have come from those other boats.

A happier aspect to that of 18 steamers rescued after floating helplessly in the high seas for 12 days. "That is a good story" any day, but media missed that one.

Those were reported to the hapless in Manila last Monday by Sen. Richard Gordon, chair of the Philippine National Red Cross, and former Social Welfare Secretary Corazon Soliman de Leon, now PNRC executive director.

The reason there were so many ships safe, the two Red Cross officials said, was due, according to naval practice, whenever there is a typhoon warning, ships at sea immediately rushed to designated safe havens nearby. Other vessels, the two said Typhoon "Frank" also rushed to those havens which were no longer safe but were the worst places to go to. There is a joke going here: sounds like the typhoon was looking for Senior Secretary Raul Gonzalez, which is not why his home city of Iloilo was the worst hit. Instead of finding safety, the boats headed into the typhoon.

On the part of Princess of the Stars, it is now obvious from the photographs that the ship captain tried to beach the ship to save as many passengers as possible. That is why it sank so near to shore, which is how those who survived survive was finally good enough to make it from at least that far to safety.

But for the loss of nearly 700 souls, the worst news got to the shore, the bigger they get, the more this station-bound pundit-like visitor up. So the big waves required the ship beached in that area on water in two of the four before tanks designed to stabilize the ship").

Proof of the tremendous of the waves was that five of a boatload of survivors from the ship drowned close to shore when big waves hit them. One was washed out of the boat by a big wave, the other two already walking ashore and had already taken off his life vest when big waves caught him and took out to sea.

Congressman during Monday's televised congressional hearings of the disaster were baffled and bewildered by the poor chief of Pagasa by allegedly incorrectly predicting the path of the typhoon, thus resulting in many vessels being caught by the storm. They were obviously grandstanding for the audience.

But they must the need to blame for the disaster. While not failing to provide themselves with billions of pesos in pork barrel, most of which ended up in private pockets, they did not provide Pagasa with enough funds to acquire modern basic sailing equipment. And not just Pagasa but the Philippine Coast Guard, which is also on the path of the typhoon as it rampaged across the Philippines. It was the Coast Guard's duty to inform the vessels at sea.

It was good, then congressmen demanded to know why the ships were communicating to them by cell phone instead of by regular ship-to-shore radio. Again, they demonstrated a lack of basic knowledge of these objects about which we unfortunately, we thanks to the stingy congressmen. The ship owner were making do with cell phones.

In fact, there was a time not so long ago when even ordinary fishermen plying their trade in waters with seaports and had no hesitating because to guide them. They had to rely on regular radio programs from local radio stations to guide them during the "junk ens" flights, or night flights when visual landmarks were not visible. The only way someone gallon-ed to be there might flights, related how they tuned to local radio stations to tell them where they were. (Remember how in movies about the Dec. 8, 1941, Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese pilots were guided by the station now, in Clark, destroyed by radio stations in Honolulu? That's not time now in the big city airports, but those were harrowing days for domestic pilots in the backward days. That situation of the 21st century is something experienced by ship captains.

But only that, the last remaining lighthouses in the Philippines that are the beacons of safety to ship captains during dark nights are being neglected by the Philippine government, again due to lack of funds from Congress. In contrast to their generosity in enacting budgets for projects that give them huge kickbacks, congressmen (who like to report that they have "the power of the purse") are ever stingy with funds for necessary and lifesaving equipment for agencies like the weather bureau, the Philippine Coast Guard and the agency in charge of lighthouses. It seems that, like the dictatorship, democracy is also dangerous to entrust to be neglect. Today, the quaint lighthouses are good only as tourist spots. But in the same time, Congress is not providing the communications equipment necessary to operate light houses in making sailing ships safe. And so lives are at needless risk.

Maybe things will improve if the law mandates that congressmen go by ship, not by plane, when they travel.

Friendships

THERE'S THE RUB

CONTARDO AD CASTRO

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

US AMBASSADOR EDGETH HUDNEY OFFERED some interesting observations during her visit to the 100-year-old Teachers Camp in Baguio last Friday. July 4, of course, used to be the country's Independence Day before Gloria Estrada, a completely legitimate president, completely legitimately changed it to June 12. July 4 has since become BOUS Friendship Day, a non-holiday and for all practical purposes a non-event. Also Filipinos have more useful to grant to it to. Instead, they thought to remind them of it.

The Ambassador, she said, the pioneer American teachers who sailed from San Francisco to Manila in 1901 aboard the SS Thomas (hence the name), are the roots of the enduring friendship between Filipinos and Americans. "The story of the Thomasites is a wonderful beginning. ... They came at a time when friendship was not the norm, and they did not only teach English, they taught life skills as well. Education bridges differences in cultures within our nations, because we appreciate two nations of great cultural diversity."

She is completely personal note, I myself have personal memories of Thomasites. That was why Amiga Of his title when the mission to Iloga Library is now named. He was a gracious, soft-hearted man who had only a handful of words to say (Ilokano) after with teaching even if he had to do it upon literally. He was loved and feared in equal measure, the first by those he nurtured and the second by those he tormented, or feared to be so, from school. He was the one who pushed me to reach beyond my going, glimpsing in me possibilities I did not know existed. To say I am eternally thankful to him for giving me a second life to say I am eternally thankful for my parents for giving me a first one. Each time I hear the word "Thomasite," I remember Gil, as he was fondly called. By profession came from the same mold.

Many of this, however, is an excuse to forget history or give it several interpretations. Though only in this country that the heroes has become the same, the vantage has become the infidels. There's certainly much to thank the Thomasites for, but that may not dispel the fact that they came to the heads of another "pioneer" group of men who brought with them not tools of learning but tools of torture, not books but instruments of destruction. These "pioneers" were veterans of the American battle-ins-accustomed to these drives or mad with fury in face of schoolbooks and helped turn Samar into a howling wilderness.

I myself have little doubt that if the Thomasites had landed here as long as the Americans, they'd have had their own version of the Thomasites. Japanese educators who would have ensured the sons to desire Japanese culture into the souls of Filipinos, after all, they were determined to wipe out our Pacific culture and replace it with an Asian one. Or they might have ensured the Filipinos who prevailed in Japan before World War II into subservient missionaries. And the Japanese authorities would now be praising Chinese the souls of Filipino-Japanese friendship instead of us sending them to collect us. None of it would have happened, of course, because of the Thomasites' unique contribution to our history and to our culture: they came at a time when friendship was not the norm, and they did not only teach English, they taught life skills as well. Education bridges differences in cultures within our nations, because we appreciate two nations of great cultural diversity."

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The untold story of the Panay deluge

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

TWO WEEKS AFTER TYPHOON "FRANK" (I.T) a devastating swathe across the country two of the worst-hit regions—Western Visayas and Eastern Visayas—never left knee-deep in flood waters, told the story of how much of the human catastrophe is patchwork to unfold.

The immensity of the catastrophe has been covered up to a flurry of investigations into the sinking of MV Princess of the Stars, inquiries that have now degenerated into a colossal blame game as each one scrambles to evade responsibility for the loss of government agencies that got caught napping since early, including the Philippine Coast Guard and the weather bureau, Pagasa.

Relievers of typhoon victims on Panay Island relocating to Manila offer a vast living tales of human misery and survival "forever" (a subtype) of flooding they had never seen in a lifetime. There are tend any single story from the news media about the scale and depth of human suffering from the calamity that has been translated into statistical summaries, where human lives lost have been reduced to digits.

Typhoon Frank's destruction is continued in an archipelago that is swept by an average of more than two storms a year, and media stories on the typhoon will have been no more than accounts of the typhoon tracked by Pagasa: progress reports, wind velocity in terms of cubic words of 220 kph at the height of the storm, rainfall in millimeters, storm surge measured in roads, bridges, buildings and houses destroyed, and estimates of lives lost, and crops destroyed. These reports have dehumanized the human tragedy of a great disaster.

The story I got from fellow Ilonggos, Visayans and relatives left of the horror of the flooding that new water rising from the floor up to the neck in a matter of minutes—not hours—sending people scampering to the second floor and rooftops for safety, a story not at all captured by press reports.

Following her arrival from a "working" visit to the United States, President Macapagal-Arroyo made a quick visit to Iloilo and the Western Islands, which stood on path of the typhoon and lashed by its torrential rains, to demonstrate two things: she was a "hands-on" presidential type of national disaster and a workaholic, and the sets full of concern with the sufferings of the Visayan people. The visit was partly intended to show that he has stamina when she was in the US at the height of the typhoon, and that part of her activities in the D.S was to lobby for the restoration of an Ilonggo, Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago, at the United Nations, for a seat in the International Court of Justice. Ilonggos remember that Iloilo's go was not home and was gallivanting in the US when disaster struck, and when her home town of La Paz, in Iloilo, was submerged in flood waters and several of her constituents sought refuge on rooftops, and for the first time, Ilonggos saw the Interim Guimaras Governor, in Roxas, a tall building, half-submerged in flood waters.

The sight of the President in Iloilo did not become the Ilonggos. Upon her arrival at the new Iloilo domestic airport in Besia as well as in San Barbara, one of the heavily flooded towns of Iloilo province, she had only the sight before anchored in president at least 200 "name leaders," to meet the presidential entourage, apparently he given opportunity, the time ordered the local officials to conduct an inventory of the infrastructure. There was no mention of an inventory of the human lives lost, and of the deaths. Never mind the lives in my video of one of the various ads clung for dear life for days on the rooftops.

The first wave of relief to the victims did not come from the government agencies. The flood of relief came from the survivors of earlier in Manila. The survivors shipped boxes of used clothes for the victims who have just made their typhoon clothes, household appliances and utensils in the storm that flooding that inundated most of Panay Island.

The floods were driven by one of the heaviest rainfalls that has ever fallen on the island in 24 hours in years for generations. Three dams of the Jalaur River project, the irrigation system in Panay, the three-mile bridge connecting the communities. It was the water from the mountains that flooded the lowlands, destroyed the crops, and the hollywood cities.

As soon as the President had ordered an investigation into the damages, she left for another quick visit to another Visayan island, near Bohol, to view the sunken Princess of the Stars, in Sibuyan. Her quaker earl left Ilonggos resentful and remembering that in the 2004 presidential election, it was the Central Visayans and Bisol Visayans votes that gave her the victories to overcome defections Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao, and the Ilonggos remember that Iloilo's go was not home and was gallivanting in the US when disaster struck, and when her home town of La Paz, in Iloilo, was submerged in flood waters and several of her constituents sought refuge on rooftops, and for the first time, Ilonggos saw the Interim Guimaras Governor, in Roxas, a tall building, half-submerged in flood waters.

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Highs and lows of telecommuting

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

THE NEW YORK TIMES RECENTLY ASKED a number experts to come up the economy and consequences' histories within the current high prices of oil would mean to the average American home. Is A number of the experts agreed that, for one, the high cost of commuting from home to workplace could make "telecommuting" more common and popular.

Sara Lindgren, who owns a career consulting firm, writes on the website, he tells city that telecommuting is sometimes understood as "working from home" but can mean employees "do different jobs at home, say, running a homebased business or pursuing a calling (writing, composing, say) from home."

Telecommuting has really taken off with the surging popularity of e-mail and the Internet, making it possible for anyone, practically anywhere in the world, to communicate with so many people at so little cost, and to access any kind of information available on the Web. I know of people who work full or part-time from home, doing jobs as diverse as writing research papers, teaching English to foreigners, answering telephone switchboards, or writing up the day-to-day results from studies conducted by others, all from the comfort of their homes.

Of course, given the relatively shallow penetration of computer use in the Philippines, and the still primitive communication infrastructure (our Coast Guard can't even keep track of ships at sea, for Heaven's sake), we're still quite a distance from the realities of telecommuting. But given the spiraling cost of gasoline and corresponding increases in public transport fares, power and resulting costs, telecommuting may become more and more a viable option for even employers and employees, as well as a boon for the environment.

* * *

BUT... and take it from me, there are huge bars on both ends of the telecommuting road. I guess it's only natural that before telecommuting, I'd meet two decades, ever since I was tightened from editing duties and could just send in my columns, four times a week by now.

There are some advantages as listed by Lindgren in her article on "Telecommuting Tips":

– Savings in commuting costs and in commuting time. And in times Manila where the typical home-office commute can take as long as two hours, that is not a small gift. For those two hours saves you not just gas or fare, but the stress of competing for cabs or space on the MRT, as well as the health hazards of pollution and the trauma of petty crime.

– Flexibility—You're no longer tied to a rigid 9-to-5 schedule, and can work at the times that work best for you: late at night or in the dead early morning hours, in site-stolen you have the time to squeeze in the innumerable chores that crop up during the day—paying bills, comforting crying children, or having conversations.

– Casual comfort—In other words, you can work in your pajamas or the ubiquitous duster, with no need to shower or change until you feel like it.

– Concentration—With no gossipy office-mates dropping in to share the latest dirt-on, no constant ringing by the telephone or issues of hours, or having to deal with workplace injustices, you can have your full attention to the work at hand and even submit your requirements before the deadline.

* * *

AND more for the disadvantages.

• Lack of communication. Sure, you don't have to deal with gossipy co-workers, but you also don't get input through osmosis, but after-meeting pep talks you can wear workday. And unlike office-mates, children don't take kindly to locked doors or refusals. And as the spouse left at home, you'll have to be the one dealing with bill collectors, delivery people, household emergencies and other matters. Beware, too, of the distraction of TV, DVD or downloaded videos.

• Space—You will need at the very least a table (four) which to work, including a comfortable chair and good lighting. Also working from home needs supplies, such as an overhearing, PC, stationeries, and office supplies—all of which you pay for yourself.

• Isolation—Telecommuting can be lonely, and if you're a long enough, you may fall into a rut that you wished to avoid when you were working in an office in the first place. It's easily working in your house clothes, sit right, but you can take it too far, and without the motivation of looking presentable to others, you can become a slovenly mess.

• Disconnect from the boss... Employers may soon bosses tend to forget about employees (and their contribution) they don't see every day (the squeaky wheel is getting your attention, after all). Out of sight, out of mind can also relate to salaries, a point of work, or assignment.

SOME questions to iron out for telecommuting, and you can take on this mode of work, says Lindgren, if you are: self-motivated, able to meet deadlines without need for structure or authority (including from your rank, creative as well as well-disciplined.

One of the things I loved best about being a journalist was waking up on a weekday and not knowing how the day would unfold. There were so many unexpected situations, new people to meet, new places to go, new things to do. Certainly, now that I'm freed from the structure of newsroom work, I find myself following a routine that requires quite an effort to break out of.

Fortunately, writing a column does require me to be out in the human story or other, hunting down material for this space. Either, the day comes when we can all do our interviews via e-mail, and enter bank addresses by simply clicking on YouTube.

Oryang's autobiography

LOOKING BACK

Anthony H. Cordesco

LAST MONDAY, JULY 7, WAS THE 114TH anniversary of the establishment of the Katipunan. Since it took a national or even a local holiday, so we glad when some people care to remember. Rhoda Rivera (photo) can hold a simple memorial service at the Bonifacio Shrine in Caloocan. Still, and in attendance were descendants of Bonifacio from his sister Maximina. Months were had at the shrine, speeches were read, and one can only hope that the descendants and high school students who were pressed into service today in the rain appreciated their participation in history.

Before anybody Carmen Guerrero Cruz Nakpil, sister of the Manila Historical Commission, was not around. Her first husband was a grandson of Bonifacio's sister Maria, and her second was related to brothers Bonifacio's mother Gregoria. Jesus who married Julio Nakpil and married to Quezon.

It was significant that Nakpil's "Marriage na Bahay ng Hangahagan" was played by the City Hall Band. I forget to remind Mayor Lim that it was one of the unsung wars of the Revolution, together with "Sobre Kot quezon" and "Bayanang Bulkang". Together were considered the anthems of the Katipunan and, if not for the title of history that sets Emilio Aguinaldo enrolled as head of the revolutionary government and later as president of the First Philippine Republic, we would probably be singing the Nakpil and Julio valley rather than "Lupang Hinirang" and "Bayang Magiliw."

After the ceremony at the Bonifacio Shrine, the mayors invited me to join him in his car for a quick trip to Intramuros to visit the one where the Katipunan was founded on the night of July 7, 1892, the same day that Rizal's exile to Dapitan was announced. Only a few people were there when I arrived, but soon a crowd started to gather. Rizal founded the first council called La Liga Filipina in a house on Barcelonet, Tondo, on July 3, 1892. It was in this organizational meeting that he met Bonifacio face to face. What they discussed remains the only unchronicled discussion? Or just Voluntary and Rizal?

From the old house Lipa was home the Katipunan had its first council meeting. The directors shifted with the change in leadership. The original house on 72 Azcarraga Street (now C. M. Recto) is no more. A simple marker used to stand on a sidewalk to remind students and pedestrians that history took place on that spot. Now there is not even that! Efforts in Boston on this site to commemorate the event. Again, I wonder if people who pass by notice, or take the trouble to read the markers and remember history made on that hallowed spot.

Sesquicentennial were delivered there, just a third offering and a very impressive execution of a ritual to honor the Philippine Martyrs, complete with panther that we doubt must some startled pedestrians (by the way, if I weren't only with the mayor of Manila, I would have looked for a safe place to hide in the first crack of gunfire, literally or otherwise).

When I was last made to young people in the 21st century about the exploits of heroes of the late 19th century, I wonder if the story sinks in. This is why reading the first hand accounts of heroes is necessary to what participants in some of history.

Gregoria de Jesus wrote a short autobiography in 1928, "Mga tala ng aking buhay." Her tales about her experiences.

"I had no fear or danger, not even death itself, wherever I accompanied the soldiers in battle, impelled as I was then by no other desire than to see satisfied the flag of an independent Philippines, and I was present in and witnessed many encounters. I was considered a soldier, and with a fine one. I learned how to ride, to shoot a rifle, and to manipulate other weapons which I retained [illegible] on many occasions.

"I had to know when it is time to the ground without eating food for the whole day, to drink dirty water from mud holes or the top of cow which. Rough fares, lasted delicious because of the very same thing. When I came to think of my life in those days, considering the result thus, I am deeply moved by how I stood it all, and how I was spared."

Oryang's narrative reads so much better in the original Tagalog, but then this is an English language column so we have to make do with the translation.

Oryang migrated to her parent's house in Caloocan and gave birth to a son they christened Andres Bonifacio. Their child did not survive. When the Revolution broke out in August 1896, she had to move from place to place to evade arrest.

"While I was with my parents, through friends, I learned that I was to be arrested the succeeding day. I therefore decided to escape right away and I did so at 11 at night with the intention of returning to Manila under cover, going through the river fields there to La Loma. I was warned like an apparition (nang kalansiwan), for, and to my fears even, I was not afraid of anything. I had already become used to all kinds of dangers."

Oryang's autobiography every now to remind us of the real there our heroes made so we can take freedom for granted today.

Comments are welcome at amcordesco@yahoo.com

Fishy risks

PRICES FOR FOOD ITEMS HAVE BEEN SPIRALING. HERE are glaring exception: fish. In fact, some fish prices have been dropping following the 60% increase of the fishes ushering of Fisherman.

It's a case of one collective imagination running wild almost with nibbling away on coupons and then making those wee-wee numbers as far as March and, eventually, to cut the axe plain. The cur-

rent plethora for fish certainly a host of explanations, some of the most logical being that about declining top water tuna or three years ago, when somewhat decreased in Bulan's source of the season and his corpse could not be recovered.

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

Anthropologists and psychologists have long been interested how people perceive risks because of its many possible applications, from road safety to public health. Particularly, people should have a balanced perception of risks. Able to weigh the risks and benefits of something, for example, though, even scientists with doctorates will sometimes be swayed by public opinion, naive media sensationalism, and even religious doomsday prophets.

Complicated as the risk perception might be, it's still important to try to make some sense of how we rate one risks, and, even more importantly, how we behave in response to those perceived risks. It's not very because often our risk perception seem almost counterfactory. We fret about coming into smoldering countries of fish from the outdoor tuna, but are fun by sensationalism about the ups of mackerel fish, allegedly toxic pesticide, or of all, possibly letting out of the ship and crushing the fish in the process.

We are the counterbalances 40 around us, of from inflated beyond means, and of our risks (and dangers being disregarded. Look at all the MMDA traffic signs being disregarded, including signs warning pedestrians they could die. No problem, even if it means risking a fatal theft across the eight lanes of Commonwealth Avenue, better known as Death Highway.

People minimize risks based on their own personal experiences, as well as what they see around them. They see dozens of pedestrians dashing across Commonwealth, some murder even narrowly being missed by a car, but you almost never see a person being hit by a car, so you figure, oh the risks are low again.

It's the same thing with cigarettes. People rarely see someone dying of lung cancer or emphysema from smoking. Not only that, they often have a lola or lola living to their 90s despite being heavy smokers, or they figure, oh, it'll never happen to me.

Despite the outrageous and horrible, fleeing to traffic another half kilometer to a pedestrian crossing or one of those overpasses is seen as time lost, and, especially for the overpasses, more energy expended, so why not just cross here? Besides, others will argue, motorists don't stop anyway at pedestrian lanes.

Many other don't motorists stop? Because they figure, rightly, that pedestrians are crossing everywhere anyway so expect at the designated lanes.

People gamble, too, when options are limited. Injured island hotwells will go out on new months into an approaching storm, because they need to catch some fish. Either they're poor and can't afford to wait for the next payday, people because they don't want to leave their dependents and livestock. Overseas Filipinos struggle themselves into a big and other real-estate scams. Here it becomes a matter of hoping against hope. Maybe, just maybe, the typhoon won't come to the volcano is not acting up and won't really erupt. And if it does? Then they'll deal with it.

Culture of risk

Anthropologists have gone into risk studies because cultures place an important role in the way we perceive and respond to risks. Many of these perceptions and responses are built on years, even centuries, of experience, with something that it would be a big risk for us to do, we've learned. That's why even back propane drivers still allows their motorcycles or their wives, in full view of passengers, to gently spread a handkerchief or towel on their backs. Those months past believe that postpartum drying on their back can lead to all kinds of respiratory illnesses or, now that they have a elderly postpartum mother, they would not allow her to shower.

Sometimes, though, we might be too quick to judge what seems to be irrational behavior. For example, I've heard several friends complaining about Filipinos not using the subways, which part them, and sometimes, at risk for accidents. But I greatly enjoyed "Silent subwaylines" in many cases, there aren't any. People are usually there by choice and need to readers. And in night falls, I've realized, too, that people avoid using the subwalks, especially as dusk lit areas, because they see a greater risk of being held up. Walking quickly crowd, where there's some light, is seen as safer than the sidewalk.

We might want to think, too, of people thinking of risks in degrees, rather than a yes-and-no dichotomy. I was thinking about this in relation to our current typhoon warning system, which is too simplistic. We have Signal No. 1 which people tend to dismiss as mild, Signal No. 2 which is perceived as mild to strong and Signal No. 3 which is supposedly strong. A Signal No. 1 typhoon can have hours of severity to people away we forget. I can turn into 1 very quickly. On the other hand, 2 and 3 can create similar problems, although a typhoon can have very powerful winds before it makes land, only to turn from a tiger into a kitten when it makes land.

Hong Kong, which also lies in the path of typhoons, has a more sophisticated system. Level 1 simply means a storm has come within an 800 kilometers radius from Hong Kong, with a potential of becoming a typhoon. The warning jumps to Level 3 when winds become stronger, accompanied by heavy rain. Hong Kong doesn't take chances here, and often goes on this option to close its many employees (as a precaution) so public transport is still functioning. Storm close is Level 3 is issued even before the typhoon hits. When a typhoon does make landfall, the warning jumps to Level 8. All offices and schools close down, and ships are not allowed out. People feel the impact, raining it to radio and television.

Would such a system work in the Philippines? We'd have to look at the cost of such a system. I can imagine the chaos media warnings as we go from Level 1 to 8 and beyond, but that might not always be productive. Sometimes, people just enjoy typical issues, as with the predictions that a great earthquake will hit on July 15. The warning has been going around through mobile phone texts and e-mail. One local Chinese newspaper had the "predictions" on its front page, and I found myself in our Sin Kwauns on the subject, forwarding an article by no other than Michael Tan, with a rebuttal from Professor.

Yet, we're not going to see many cases with this prediction. It's all done before the check. Maybe we're just so battered with disasters, including political ones, that we actually feel comfortable, maybe those thrills, in these fresh indoor like predictions.

'Progressive' Eastern Samar's hellish roads

LAST JUNE 11, MY WIFE[D] AND I WENT to Guiuan, Eastern Samar, to participate in the annual fiesta celebration. My father's relatives are from that town.[1] I was told that it would be a 3.5-hour drive from our place here in Tacloban City. On our way there, I discovered, to my horror, the hellish state of the roads in Eastern Samar.

Potholes were everywhere, we had to endure a bumpy ride all the way to Guiuan. Not only that, the roads were very narrow. Our driver had to avoid the potholes and was forced to use the road-side most of the time if only to ensure that our vehicle would survive the trip.

The roads in the western side of Samar were much better, but still bumpy. But the potholes were bad like on the eastern side. Along the way, we could see big pictures of Sen. Bong Revilla proclaiming the progress of Eastern Samar and billboards with Rep. Teodoro Casiño apologizing to constituents for the sorry state of roads. If he claimed he was doing his best to solve the problem.[2]

Apparently, nothing is being done. I think it is high time the people of Eastern Samar demanded action and some sort of accountability from their governor and congressman. The province will be stuck in the backwaters[3] if its road network from hell will not be rehabilitated at the earliest possible time. These officials are supposedly close to President Macapagal-Arroyo. Why don't they use their connections to ask for immediate help?

Eastern Samar is a beautiful place. It has lots of potential. But its horrible road network will keep it from progressing, and people will not know where to invest.

—MATTHEW PEZZA,
brendaldmatthew@yahoo.com

Sulu oil exploration only after 'super profits'

IMBAHASYON: LABAS NG BILYANG Mamamahalaan ng Pilipinas (Pamahalaan) strongly takes exception to the editorial "Striking oil" (Inquirer, 6/19/08), which refused our position against ExxonMobil's offshore mining in Sulu into the strained logic of anti-Muslim imperialism.

Pamahalaya admits that the country needs to develop its own sources of energy because it is in the interest of the Filipino today and the generations that will come after them. But we oppose, and will continue doing so any unilateralizing demand by transnational agenda and, yes, by the treacherous drive of the imperialist powers—whether based in the United States or elsewhere—for "super profits."

ExxonMobil's notorious record of exploitation and destruction of environment is enough ground why the so-called treasure, after appreciation of the waste and benefits of doing business would not and never be applicable in offshore mining in Sulu Sea. In fact, Jurassic coal benefit analysis has been used by oil giants and environmentalists to justify the continuing extraction, destruction and plunder of energy resources.

Our group will only support oil and gas exploration activity under the following conditions: (1) The oil and gas exploration will not destroy the marine environment and people's source of livelihood. (2) The fisherfolk will be allowed to fish and their rights will be fully promised and respected at all times; in our previous experiences with offshore mining, the fishermen were banned from fishing areas if they were privately-owned. (3) The billions of bucks of oil and gas extracted will be used in socio-economic needs and to reduce, if not eliminate, our country's dependence on foreign petroleum imports. (4) There should be a transfer of technology to enable the society to develop its own oil and gas capacity. (5) Payment for the invested capital of foreign parties, including the interest, should be but paid should not be computed according to those in capital and the capitalist life of investments.

ExxonMobil's officials, headed by Stephen Crowder, said the plan to explore oil and gas in Sulu was a big deal for the company, and the ExxonMobil was encouraged by preliminary seismic data on the potential of oil and gas reserves in Sulu Sea. Let us carefully read between the lines.

ExxonMobil will not invest $1.0 million for nothing. Our experience with the oil giants in the Philippines is that the prices of petroleum products, specifically regular gasoline, are updated 75 percent of the time of our drilling operations. As direct consumers of petroleum products, Filipino fisherfolk are forced to work "triple time" to be able to cope with the soaring fuel prices.

To set the record straight, ExxonMobil will not engage in offshore mining in Sulu Sea for no other reason than super profits. That is imperialism at work.

—FERDINAND I. URCIA chair,
Pamalakaya, 13A Mahaboby St.,
Central District, Quezon City

LETTERS

TO CELEBRATE Independence Day, a worker installs flag cupolas at the Quezon Memorial Circle.

Philippine flag desecrated by 'Pilipinas Kong Mahal' gambit

DURING THE COMMEMORATION OF the 110th Philippine Independence last June 12, a 45 x 90 Philippine flag was displayed in the Provincial Capitol Compound of Camarines Norte. Despite the multitudes that attended the ceremony, it seemed no one, except perhaps myself, observed that the flag had been desecrated by the phrase "Pilipinas kong Mahal" which was printed in bold letters on it.

When I attended the state meeting of Camarines Norte Lodge No. 147 on June 14th at the Committee Room Masonic Center on Gen. W. P. Pimentel Avenue, Daet, a huge Philippine flag, similarly desecrated, was on display at the entrance of the building. But no one could say who raised the flag.

I wonder if the Philippine Heraldry Committee would take action against those responsible for the desecration of the Philippine flag which, according to flag etiquette, should not be defaced by any lettering or object painted on it.

I suggest that those responsible for the desecration be punished to discourage such violations of the law in the future.

—GODOFREDO O. PETILLO, JR.
JP Rizal Street, Barangay Camambugan,
Daet, Camarines Norte 4600

Change an age-old advocacy in RP

I HOPE HIDDI AM ABLEBY READER OF Cotabato Quirno. I like his style. Browsing the message in his column "Spirit, change" (Inquirer, 6/18/08), is not a new advocacy in our culture of public governance.

Time and time again, through the last 10 years of my life—27 of them in government—Filipinos have been reminded by their members and sermons to exercise the true meaning of "public service." But the exhortations has always fallen on the deaf ears of those enjoying the rules of corruption.

I wish my youth today would appreciate much better and follow the examples of Diosdado Jose, Ed Panlilio, Isabela Gov. Grace Padaca, Naga Mayor Jesse Robredo and other silent but honest and sincere public servants.

—MARCIANA TOLENTINO,
mail1404@yahoo.com.ph

Very inspiring films provoke thought, pride

THIS IS IN REACTION TO MICHAEL L. Tan's June 25 column "Queen City" (Inquirer, 6/25/08). I cannot thank him enough for bringing to Filipinos' attention the two films "Castillan Memoirs" and "Queen City of the Pacific." Their colonial undertones notwithstanding, the films are testimonies to resistance of the way things used to be. I am 34 years old and a resident of the United States in the last 22 years. I viewed both films repeatedly, and each time I did, I wept for my country.

I look forward to seeing home for good, very soon now. Nothing like these two films to make me wonder, whether I, or Filipinos in general, made the right decisions all that time.

Please, please, let more people see these, they are simply very inspiring! It was amazing how in a few minutes I was crying with so much pride for my "Queen City of the Pacific."

—EDGAR SC.
sgvanoo@yahoo.com

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No smooth sailing yet for Hanjin

By Tenorio Grojas
Rolando Fernando, Zambales

AS ITS "GODMOTHER," President Macapagal-Arroyo, wished, the MV Argolikos has sailed out safely.

The 45,000-ton container vessel, the first to be made by Filipino workers at a Korean-owned shipyard in Subic, Zambales, reached the Yantian Port in China on Monday without any hitch.

"May ships built in this shipyard and, hopefully very soon also in the shipyard of Mindanao from Manila sail over the seven seas of the world for many years," the President said on July 5 when she dispatched the vessel with high hopes.

But her happy wish for the shipbuilder, Hanjin Heavy Industries & Construction Philippines Inc., has yet to be seen.

Jong Dae Shin, president of HHIC Philippines, is optimistic. But businesswise, the company's motto will be on track, but it will not an easy ride. Like and business involve "a story of solving problems after problems," he said.

Nine two years in operations, the better side is that "our workers already experienced a complete ship," Jong said. "With skills accumulated, our production will be more effective," he said in virtue, the role of Filipino workers in the project that made to make this part of the Subic Bay Freeport the fourth largest shipbuilding facility in the world.

The worse side is that the global shipbuilding industry is getting keen competition, Jong said. HHIC Philippines' $114-million turnover spans 30 years—half the time that the United States conserved Subic Bay into one of its crucial naval bases in the Asia-Pacific region.

The company hopes to stay ahead of the loop by "strengthening safety measures, get more productiveness and strong with productiveness, give more opportunities and welfare to Filipino workers," Jong said.

Rough sailing

For Zambales Gov. Amor Deloso, the smooth sailing might just be on the manufacturing side. Weak governing may spur investors "Pa[illegible] have not been resolved yet)," he said.

What he will not keep a blind eye to are issues related to the safety and health of workers, proper relocation of about 1,000 families displaced from villages occupied by the shipyard, sound environmental management, and compliance with national and local laws.

"I appreciate Hanjin's start in the business in this part of Zambales but you know, any colonilla up break bring (the benefits are not only in terms of) economic revenue. The social costs should be addressed. You can't claim to be doing good businesses if you're not good in the workers, communities and the environment," Deloso, a lawyer, said.

HHIC Philippines has run agreement on several issues.

Resettlement project

The Aglaroba resettlement project is between its first predecessors, having left the implementation largely to local officials and some executives of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA).

Complaints arose even as it gave P10 million for the construction of structures and utilities at the resettlement, paid P24 million for compensation damages to homeowners, and shelled out P6.5 million to farmers whose crops and trees were destroyed.

No one, however, has been made liable for incomplete and damaged structures and missing funds.

The strings of death involving workers—and hurts than 27 by Deloso's tally—now HHIC Philippines and its contractors now the subject of scrutiny by the SBMA and the Department of Labor and Employment.

Malaria, which the Department of Health said is endemic in Subic town, has stalked 15 workers, killing at least three.

Carabaos/cows in forest

The condominium project atop the Subic Overpass's Baseo forest—part of a protected area—drew flak for the company's emphasis with environmental laws.

A Senate investigation showed that the firm had already completed the eighth floor of its 22-story building by July 2007 when the SBMA issued it an environmental clearance certificate that same month. That building and another 12-story structure will be home to about 200 Korean executives and their families.

HHIC Philippines handled the Sagrayan resettlement together with the SBMA and Conrad Kellogg, but poor ground preparations caused the soil to sink and the 160 houses to suffer cracks.

The Hinduraza project, which is also expected to be completed soon, is being criticized for alleged attempts to bribe local officials enforcing environmental laws.

For much, Jong and other Korean officials have denied wrongdoings. What the firm is addressing with earnest is the issue of workers' safety.

Like double drips that withstood the battering of strong winds, HHIC Philippines is out bound to meet not and do business elsewhere, Jong said.

Better location, skilled manpower and the government's investment incentives are making it stay the course.

MV ARGOLIKOS, the first ship built at the Hanjin shipyard in Subic, Zambales, has embarked on its maiden voyage to China. INQ photo

Integrated farming reaps success

By Anselmo Roque
Santiago City at Malico

IN 2005, FARMER PEDRO Cuarillo, 40, asked 28 of his neighbors in the farming village of San Joaquin in Balungao, Pangasinan, to work with him on his three-hectare lot to raise crops and animals for food.

Cuarillo's group planted rice, corn and various vegetables and cultivated and raised tilapia, chickens, turkeys, ducks, goats and pigs.

Weekly informal meetings and discussions were held. In time, his neighbors started adopting the farming system he introduced.

Cuarillo said his farm had been producing the daily food needs of his family with enough cash flow to boot. His neighbors enjoy the same benefits.

According to the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice), Cuarillo and his neighbors are among the growing list of rice farmers in the country who subscribe to the "palayamanan system," coined from the Filipino words "palay" (unhusked rice) and "hayuman" (wealth).

The system is offered by PhilRice as a way of improving further the productivity of farmers. Cuarillo was one of those who attended a training seminar on palayamanan who adopted the system and became advocate in his community.

Integration

According to PhilRice, seasoned integration is an ecologically sound approach to manage the needs of a family of five. Through palayamanan, a farmer can expect better production and income, it said.

The key concept in the system is a high level of integration.

"It combines rice with other high-value crops and trees, fish, poultry livestock and biomass recycling; it represents efficient use of available farm resources and highlights the interconnectivity between each resource and byproduct through modern available technologies," said Dr. Leocadio Sebastian, a former PhilRice executive director, during the project's launching in 2002.

Palayamanan is an old paradigm, which was immortalized in the Filipino traditional song "Bahay Kubo," but it lost its popularity to the widespread "rice-rice culture" every cropping season, Sebastian said.

Among the system's benefits are "continuous food supply, higher income and economic stability, increased farm productivity and sustainability, reduced production risk, maximized use of land or water resource allocation, and enhanced diversity and ecological imbalance," PhilRice said.

The land is subdivided into several areas that can be used for a farmhouse or hut, nursery, vegetable garden, animal production and sugar, everything a field crop production area for rice, tree-fish culture and tuck crops, a small farm reservoir for fish culture, and an area for fruit trees and vegetables.

Strategy

Rizal Corales, who leads the palayamanan project, said farmers could use the following as guide:

• For crops, farmers should plant about half a hectare with rice. Then can be planted along the perimeter and remain while vegetables can be grown on the bunds (earth mounds or embankments).

• For early crops and vegetables, farmers should plant variety of crops, such as -raisin, melon, cucumber, squash, and corn during the dry season, and tomato, eggplant, pepper, string beans, bitter gourd, sponge gourd and okra during the wet season.

Grains and raised plots should be put up for vegetable production during the rainy season but their beds must be lagged to protect them from insects. Leafy vegetables, such as mustard and lettuce, should be provided with fine-mesh nets.

Fruit and vegetable trees are also good sources of income, he said.

Livestock can yield big income. Raising duck and chicken can provide immediate cash, while goats, sheep and pigs can cover other expenses. Large animals, like cows and carabaos, can provide some income.

A multi-layered single tree system can be used for raising cows, 10 goats, 10 pigs, 30 chickens and 50 ducks.

A layer of deep bull, rice bran, sawdust, chopped rice straw and dried leaves mixed with rice bull and garden soil is recommended for reduced cleaning and less fertilizer use later.

Benefits

Palayamanan's benefits can be categorized into economic and cash returns, PhilRice said.

The economic benefits are continuous food supply for the family, reduced production risks, savings and healthy diet from eating homegrown crops, and savings from converting biomass wastes into fertilizer.

The cash benefits, according to PhilRice studies in 2005, showed the following net income per year for five, P53,045; onion, P57,288; tomato, P1,258; vegetables, P14,647; two cycles of "tree-fish" and gate farming, P97,305; and two cycles of raising 30 chickens and five pigs, P7,046 or a total of P181,213.

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Across the NATION

Bulacan cries foul on water misdeal

CITY OF MALOLOS—GOV. JOSELITO MENDOZA has assailed the Manila Waterworks Sewerage System (MWSS) after it cancelled its committed investment for a continuous supply of water in the province through the Bulacan Bulk Water System (BBWS) project.

Mendoza on Tuesday said he asked President Macapagal-Arroyo to help the province pursue the project despite the MWSS recent decision, which some seven months after Bulacan and MWSS officials signed a memorandum of agreement on the water supply project that would benefit 1.2 million Bulacan residents.

"We have already sought the help of the President during the recent regional development council meeting and she assured us she will help. She told us this is just waiting for the authorized opinion of the Solicitor General and Development authority," Mendoza said.

Not in agreement

He said Bulacan officials were also concerned about MWSS decision to hold another bidding to choose the project contractor.

"What right does MWSS have to hold bidding for the project without seeking the approval of or notifying the provincial government?" Mendoza asked.

Under the MOA, Bluestone and the concerned government agreed that it would withdraw a case it filed against MWSS involving the collection of charges from the facility's use of the waters of Angat Dam for its operations.

On May 30, Justice Angelina Sandoval-Gutierrez of the Court of Appeals affirmed a 2005 local court decision outlining the MWSS to remit to the Bulacan government and to the host towns of Bustos, Norzagaray and Santa Maria the P11.5-billion BBWS.

"We will be seeking an audience with the President within 10 days. We still give her the written position of the provincial government. Hopefully, she would get with us and have the BBWS project production resumed," Mendoza said.

Bulacan beneficiaries

Under the BBWS first phase, an initial 18 or 24 towns and cities of Bulacan will finally get water supply from Angat Dam. The remaining 14 towns and cities will be covered in the project's second phase.

MWSS and its concessionaire, the Manila Water Company Inc. (MWCI), are tasked with implementing the project.

Noel Jolo, BBWS information officer, said the company has yet to receive official information or instruction from MWSS to stop the project.

Local officials said since Angat Dam was built and operated more than 50 years ago as a hydroelectric power plant of the National Power Corp., its waters did not benefit Bulacan residents but have been delivered to consumers in Metro Manila.

Bulacan farmers, however, benefit from the dam as it releases irrigation water to feed the land.

Groundwater depletion

Mendoza said the project is Bulacan's solution to the depletion of its groundwater resources to alleviate mounting implementation.

Pastor Florencio Bala, chair of the Christian Ministers Council of Bulacan and head of the local United Pentecostal Church, said Bulakenyos are concerned about the project because they have been longing for a continuous water supply and they believed MWSS would solve this problem.

"We are hoping that [the project] will not be prohibited," Bulacan Governor Jonvic Remulla, Inquirer Central Luzon

GRAZE LAND
It's a picturesque scene out of coffee-table books—of a cow in pasture in Bataan Island—that was vilified elsewhere in Bataan, the country's northernmost province known for its windswept, rocky shores.
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER PHOTO

No ransom raised for linemen

ZAMBOANGA CITY—THE ULTIMATUM SET by the kidnappers of four Basilan Electric Cooperative (Basilelco) workers expired yesterday without the P1-million ransom being raised.

Basilelco manager Alfredo Chan said there was nothing he can do except pray.

"We are leaving the fate of our employees to the hands of our Almighty. All we could offer is deep prayers," he said.

Chan also refused to reveal developments in the negotiations, saying these should come from the negotiators themselves—Basilan Board of Directors Mesid Sirah and Mufrid Ismul.

However said Sirah and Ismul have been working to convince the kidnappers to extend the deadline while some people are trying to collect donations to raise the amount.

Basilan Vice Gov. Al Rashood Sahidulani said he was hoping people would donate money.

Sahidulani earlier said he was willing to give at least P100,000 to the kidnappers as "reward and lodging fee" in exchange for the victims' freedom.

Muslim Bishop Martin Jumoad called on the faithful to offer prayers.

"I had really had about the situation. The four bishops in there are really very poor and when we ran after to be included in our Mass for prayers of the faithful their names in the hands of their captors," Jumoad said.

Jumoad said Isabela City in Basilan archbishop the Most Rev. Elizabeth Dimaya got yesterday. "But one parishioner in Isabela served me displaying a mixture of sadness and joy because of the kidnapping."

Still in the hands of their captors since June 26 are Emilberto Gaspar, his brother Alberto, the following and his brother Bernie.

Sahidulani on Friday announced his willdeclared it was negotiations.

"I say not. The kidnappers got mad at me. Besides, there are some other things that really require more attention rather than dealing with the kidnappers, "sahidulani said.

He said kidnappers got angry "when I offered them P50,000 to P100,000 as board and lodging fee."

Apparently, they don't want the board and lodging fee," he said. Jaime S. Alipala, Inquirer Mindanao

NEWSBRIEFS

AGUSAN DEL SUR

Nails in logs vs poaching

THE ENVIRONMENT office in the region has reactivated a campaign to drive ice-inch nails into logs to stop poaching.

Gilberto Reinoso, Department of Environment and Natural Resources director in the Caraga region, said the campaign has been enforced by the police and Barangay Tandag-sur, and was proven effective.

Chris V. Panganiban, Inquirer Mindanao

LANAO DEL NORTE

3 'salvage' victims found

POLICE on June 29 found the bodies of three men, suspected to be victims of summary execution, in separate areas in Barangay Payawan here.

SPO4 Edwin Gayacao, of the Iligan police's investigation unit, said the bodies had bullet wounds and their hands and feet were tied with packaging tape.

Their hands, he said, were wrapped with paper and fastened by tape. The bodies were taken to a mortuary in Dagong, Iligan City.

Marbella Bolasoc-Bhuiyya, contributor

DAVAO CITY

P100M sought for road

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo ordered the Department of Public Works and Highways to release P100 million to build a 7.2-kilometer road that connects Jose Abad Santos, Bacas-del Rio to Biao, Barangay Dominga.

Mayor Alexander Pangilan, of Jose Abad Santos, said the road was the town's "missing link toward economic development."

Edith E. Aparico Inquirer Mindanao

ZAMBOANGA CITY

Comelec ARMM in wrong place

THE REGIONAL office of the Commission on Elections (Comelec) for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) will transfer to Cotabato City from here.

Zamboanga City Mayor Celso Lobregat said the Comelec ARMM office was in the wrong place because Zamboanga was never part of the ARMM.

Comelec Chair Jose Melo, who was in the city recently, said the Comelec would move out as soon as possible.

Ed Gonzal, Inquirer Mindanao

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY

4 Vietnamese held for poaching

FOUR Vietnamese nationals were arrested by Philippine law enforcers Sunday in municipal waters of El Nido in Northern Palawan for illegal entry and poaching, according to reports Monday.

El Nido Mayor Leonin Corral told Inquirer the Vietnamese were in one of five boats chased by a team from the Philippine Navy, Coast Guard and the Philippine National Police near the island of Bantayan.

The Vietnamese, Corral said, "had no passports and were without proper papers in Philippine territory." They were to be transferred to Puerto Princesa City to face charges.

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Bishops' plea prompts GMA action on flooding

COTABATO CITY—UPON PERSONAL request of two Cotabato bishops, Malacañang has ordered the immediate clearing and dredging of the heavily silted Rio Grande de Mindanao to protect some 20,000 families from flood waters.

The decision earlier appealed for President Macapagal-Arroyo to visit the area and see for herself the damage wrought by week-long flooding that also forced the suspension of classes in private and public schools.

More than 50 persons in Cotabato City and nearby Sultan Kudarat town in Sharriff Kabunsuan have been submerged a week after Typhoon "Frank" struck Mindanao.

Cotabato Archbishop Orlando Quevedo and Cotabato Auxiliary Bishop Jose Colin Bagaforo personally met with Undersecretary Silvestre Mendoza, of Malacañang's Office of Religious Affairs, and relayed the people' distress to the President.

Bagaforo said the President has public service officials in words round the clock to ensure that water level in the city and its environs would subside.

"Heavy equipment to be used to dredge/dig the river are on the way from Davao City. I was told by the Office of Religious Affairs," Bagaforo said in a radio interview.

'When the conflict died down ... they evacuate anew as water washed away their homes.'

Public Works Undersecretary for Mindanao Romeo Montemayor also directed no-fly to Cotabato City Tuesday to assess the situation.

"A lot of things have to be done since 24 of the city's 37 villages are under water," Bagaforo said.

Government engineers have earlier said the accumulation of some 20 tons of water hyacinth, now seeping on area about eight hectares wide at the corner of the downstream channel of the Rio Grande de Mindanao at the border of Cotabato City and Sharriff Kabunsuan, blocked the flow of the silted river to the Illana Gulf, drowning some instead to residential areas.

Fr. Daniel Pwamilla, SSCC, parish priest of Rosary Heights, said the flooding was aggravated by high tide.

Malacañang also released to the Department of Public Works and Highways an initial P2 million to be used for workers who have been trying to cut down the water lilies manually.

Mayor Muslimin Imam and Tocan Mamaris, former mayor of Sultan Kudarat town in Sharriff Kabunsuan province, led civilian and military volunteers in an attempt to remove the dams more lilies blocking the river, but have done little due to lack of equipment.

Several schools here also have to be closed and classes temporarily suspended as flood waters rose in and out.

Norma Simson, a public school principal, said the suspension of classes was meant to protect the children from more water disease.

The Notre Dame University elementary department has joined other schools in suspending classes indefinitely until the schools' floors dry up.

At the Notre Dame Village National High School, flood waters reportedly brought with them reptiles and snakes, bringing fear among school authorities and parents.

In Barangay Ulanding, Midsayap, North Cotabato, some 45 kilometers north of here, thousands of families were also displaced by the floods.

"Worse, they fled last week due to armed conflict between rebels and soldiers," Bagaforo said. "When the conflict died down and as people started to return home, they evacuate anew as water washed away their homes."

While efforts are underway from the national government, Bagaforo appealed for more help to feed the displaced families. Ed with fernandez, Noah Macabato and Charlie Arlene, Inquirer Mindanao

Jeep, bus …

From page A1

up the cost of diesel in the country by 41.8 percent since the start of the year and by 63.4 percent since June 2007.

The pump price of diesel, the fuel used by public utility vehicles, now ranges from P52.36 to P54.97 a liter and could further go up by P1.6.

Provincial buses not covered

Provincial buses are not covered by the fare adjustment because they were earlier given "provisional increases," Lizada said.

Lizada announced the fare adjustments in a phone patch interview following the joint Cabinet Oversight Economic Development Authority (Neda) meeting presided over by Environment Secretary Lito Atienza, which approved the new round of fare increases.

Lizada said the LTFRB had recommended to the Neda board a fare increase of P1 for jeepneys for the first four kilometers, or from P7.50 to P8.50.

However, the new minimum fare of jeepneys this week will go up by 50 centavos because the LTFRB already approved a 50-centavo provisional increase in the third week of May.

Malacañang approved the fare petition following demands from major transport groups for a fare hike as gasoline in the country increased for the 18th time last weekend.

Jeepney drivers want more

The Pinag-isang Samahan ng Tsuper at Operator Nationwide (Piston) on Sunday called for up to 20-liters the government's proposed fare increase.

Piston said it wanted an increase of P4 to P5 in fares, up from the 50 centavos it sought in October last year when a liter of diesel cost only P16.

The Federation of Jeepney Drivers and Operators (Fejodap) also made a similar call, saying that after a series of weekend increases in pump prices, it would amend its petition by seeking an increase in the minimum fare from P6 to P10.

Second-round effects

"These fare increases are second-round effects of inflation," said acting Neda Director General Augustus Santos.

Santos said inflation was expected to remain at double-digit levels in July after hitting a 14-year high of 11.4 percent in June but price growth should taper off later in the year.

The central bank expects inflation this year to reach 7.9 percent, well above the government target of 3.5 percent and 2.16 percent inflation in 2007.

Fuel subsidy

Santos said other "programs" to help public utility vehicles (PUVs) cope with the weekly hikes of increases were still being discussed.

On the proposed P2-fuel subsidy per liter of diesel, Santos said that initially the instructions of Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza was to draft its mechanics and present it to the Cabinet.

"How, I did that the mechanics were made, Santos said. "In principle (it has been) approved by the Cabinet."

Santos advised the LTFRB to "go back to the Cabinet (body) based for final approval to implement it." With reports from Rino T. Hilotelbo and Reuters

It's not enough, say transport leaders

TRANSPORT LEADERS YESterday said that the fare increase approved by the government would hardly help them, should a huge one-liter fuel hike take effect.

They said the fare increase may result in an additional income of P200 a day for jeepney drivers, but the amount would be wiped out if gasoline and diesel prices were up by P1.6 a liter.

"We welcome the fare increase, but it is being overtaken by fuel price increases," said George San Pedro, secretary general of the Pagkakaisa ng mga Samahan ng Tsuper at Operator Nationwide.

Oil companies said they still needed to recover about P0.16-P1.8 per liter on gasoline and diesel, prompting the Department of Energy to remark that a one-time increase may make letters more than incremental increases over week.

The Consumer and Oil Price Watch said the oil firms had yet to recoup P16 a liter for diesel. Rino T. Hilotelbo and Wigel T. Ely

Soaring prices choke Metro LRT, MRT trains

From page A1

Asian countries that subsidize fuel prices, Filipinos are forced to pay the free market rate for gas. So far this year, they have been hit with 10 fuel price hikes for a total increase of over 35 percent as global oil prices climb to stratospheric levels.

With unleaded gas now costing over P61 per liter, tens of thousands of our workers are joining the queues for Metro Manila's already overcrowded aboveground train system.

"It's a terrible journey," said Senior Jed Rosello, a call center executive who traveled to the Makati business district one recent morning by train.

"The line to get on starts from the back of the train. I have never got a seat."

Second line were people wedged like sardines into the car and women rocking themselves with hand-held fans despite the air-conditioning.

During the morning peak hour, the queues at various rail stations stretched into the streets.

Pressure on middle class

Train fares are cheap, a key factor in a nation where one-third of the population live on less than $1 a day. With inflation rocketing to almost 11.9 percent to June, the highest in 14 years, the pressure on the poor is worse than before.

Even the middle class, however, has been rendered vulnerable to the fuel and food price increases that have led the inflationary surge.

As these looking to cut travel costs, the metalmark train fare is a subsidized P12. But because there are only three railway lines across the city, commuters then have to take a bus or a passenger van to their destination as a result of a few more pesos.

Not just for masses

Once fuel prices started increasing to warrant in the second quarter of this year, the number of passengers using the railway has declined sharply.

"The LRT used to be seen as transport for the masses but now you can see more and more people wearing ties and having," said Mel Robles, administrator of the Light Rail Transit (LRT) Authority.

"It's on longer a matter of choice but of necessity."

Two government companies run the rail system in Metro Manila—the LRT Authority and the Metro Rail Transit (MRT) Authority.

Together, the two companies carried about one million people per day in 2006, up from about 934,000 at the start of the year.

Saving time

Despite being squeezed into overcrowded trains, commuters said they were saving time and money.

"It's crowded but that is compensated by the short travel time and the cost," said Nancy Eleria, a professor of engineering at University of Santo Tomas.

"With the MRT, it will take me 20 minutes, but by car it could take me two hours."

The government has ambitious plans to extend train services in Metro Manila, eventually covering much of the metropolis. But such plans will take years to materialize and cost billions of dollars.

Officials worried

The surge in demand for trains is worrying transport officials.

"The problem is that we can only take so much," said Roberto Lastimoso, MRT general manager. "We have told the government time and again that our situation is becoming critical. It is an issue of national concern."

"At peak hours it's so uncomfortable, passengers are pushing one another, passengers everything at street level. You have to deal with jostling by other passengers and the smell of people," Romero

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Gov't economists set to meet bishops

From page A1

the Cabinet was considering the removal of VAT rate on oil to make it "revenue neutral." Lowering the rate, however, needs congressional action.

In the House of Representatives, Speaker Prospero Nograles proposed that the VAT on oil be pegged at P3 a liter.

Before the start of yesterday's Cabinet meeting, Mr Arroyo said her administration would continue with its programs to bring relief to the people such as the fossil fuel subsidy program and subsidies for the poor.

"We can do this all with the help of the (oil-producing) government rather than come from taxes from the rich," Ms Arroyo said in Filipino, in apparent reference to the VAT on oil.

Unwise

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said he would like to sit down with members of the CBCP to discuss ways to counter the effects of rising commodity prices and to explain why lifting the VAT was not a prudent thing to do.

Teves said lifting the VAT was unwise because it would lead to substantial losses in tax collection. Removing the VAT on oil alone would result in foregone revenues for the government, money that should be used to fund pro-poor programs, he said.

Middle class and rich

He said removing the VAT would benefit only the middle class and the rich, and not the poor. This is because agricultural and food products, which the poor consume heavily, are already VAT-exempt.

Those who pay more VAT, which is a form of consumption tax, are the rich because they consume more goods and services, Teves said.

Finance Undersecretary Gil Beltran said 93 percent of the VAT collected by the national government was paid for by the middle class and rich taxpayers. The poor in fact benefits from the VAT because proceeds of the tax are used to fund additional social services for them, he said.

Stick to religion

Beltran also said bishops did not have the expertise on economic matters, and should therefore stick to giving advice on matters of religion, faith and morals.

"If they want to remove the VAT, it should be clear to them that what they are asking for is to help the rich and not the poor," he said.

Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya said the economic managers had been asked to be "ready" for a meeting with the bishops.

"We are open to suggestions on how this new round of subsidies will be given and suggestions from the bishops are very much welcome," Andaya said.

He said he believed the bishops' request to withdraw the oil subsidy system in which the oil tax proceeds go to the intended beneficiaries and how the beneficiaries would use them.

"We have to return the VAT to those who need it. We will have more subsidies and we are prepared for it," Andaya said at a news briefing following the Cabinet meeting.

The budget secretary said the government intended to spend this year P1.6 billion in addition to VAT revenues because of soaring oil prices.

Already, the President had released P4 billion from the initial windfall from the VAT on oil—P3 billion to help small electricity users pay their bills, P1 billion in loans and subsidiaries for poor students, and another P1 billion to help jeepney operators and drivers convert diesel engines to those that run on LPG and compressed natural gas.

Subsidized rice

At the briefing, Santos said the excess revenues from the VAT on oil were also being used by the National Food Authority to subsidize rice being sold to the poor at P18.25 a kilo.

Santos said the Cabinet was thinking of pushing for reducing the VAT rate on oil "so that government will not generate additional revenues and have the additional revenues channeled to oil consumers."

Asked how much the VAT rate would be reduced, he said it would depend on the price of oil, which the government had projected at $65 per barrel at the start of the year but had already risen to $140-$145 per barrel.

"That's not suspending. That is lowering it to make it neutral but that requires legislation," he said.

Brownie points

In the Senate, Sen Mar Roxas said the government would rather continue handing out subsidies in the post-Estrada (the VAT on oil) era now, "brownie points" from the public and lift the President's rock-bottom ratings.

"Why go on collecting the VAT only to turn giddy on subsidizing it anyway? Everyone knows that when the government spends, there are leakages, there is politicking, favoritism," Roxas said.

Sen. Francis Escudero said Teves had played dumb to mounting calls for the suspension of the VAT on oil "simply because it would affect the collection of the Bureau of Internal Revenue and Bureau of Customs, which stand to receive hefty bonuses should their collections exceed this year's targets."

Amend Attrition Law

Escudero said that the Attrition Law, which provides penalties and rewards to spur the BIR and BOC to boost collections, should be amended to exclude improvement in revenue collections arising from unnecessary events such as the surge in crude oil prices.

Last week, Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri sponsored a P586-million reward awarded by Customs Commissioner Napoleon Morales to himself and his staff for exceeding the agency's 2006 collections mainly "from the advance payment of 2007" seen by oil companies. With reports from AD C. Cabacungan Jr. and Norman Bordadora

Demand for RP nurses overseas slowing down

From page A1

changes of policy in destination countries, the currency situation of exchange, job and quality problems, among other things," the PNA president, Dr Leah Samaniego-Paguia, said in a press conference yesterday at the PNA headquarters in Manila.

The past few years have seen an exodus of Filipino nurses abroad to cure for the aging baby-boomer populations in the United States and the United Kingdom in exchange for higher pay and the possibility of gaining immigrant status.

Because of the great demand for Filipino nurses, colleges and universities have added nursing courses in their curricula to rush to on the wave.

According to Duque and officials, however, nursing is not a lucrative profession anymore and students who think they can get rich quick just to pursue passions abroad are seriously mistaken.

"Go into nursing for the right reasons. If you are thinking of going into nursing to be able to go abroad or because your family is pressuring you, then it is not the time," said Josefina Tuazon, dean of the University of the Philippines College of Nursing.

"This is not a good time to be pegged as a school that takes care of 'ti-gabalawan,'" Tuazon said.

Plateau

For the past two years, the demand for nurses in key destinations like the United States and the United Kingdom has declined, Duque said.

This started in 2006, when the demand for Philippine nurses (RNs) plateaued due to US visa stringencies and UK policy change, which upgraded the shift in (hiring) homegrown health workers instead of recruiting from overseas," she said.

Because of the slowdown in overseas postings, the domestic market is now seeing a glut in nurses.

Pelp Marilyn Lorenzo, head of the University of the Philippines' Institute of Health Policy and Development Studies, said major hospitals like Philippine General Hospital and St. Luke's Medical Center had a backlog of nursing applicants and a waiting time of 6-12 months.

But the drop in overseas demand has neither stopped new hits among schools from accepting enrollees nor dampened the enthusiasm of students to enter the profession, she said.

Lorenzo said that in 2006, 107,195 students graduated with a nursing degree, up from 296,000 in 2005.

St. Luke's, for instance, still gets 30 applications daily, she said.

Shortcut to profession

PNA officials blamed the "commercialization" of nursing for the oversupply of nurses and the proliferation of the practical nursing course, which some schools describe as a shortcut to entering the profession.

The practical nursing course is not accredited by the Philippines and is equivalent to a vocational course, they said.

Lorenzo said the PNA was questioning the quality of practical nursing courses offered by some schools because no regulations had been set for such a course in the country.

In other countries, practical nurses work under the supervision of registered nurses. Some of them can be described as nursing assistants.

According to the PNA, in situations advertising practical nursing is a way to work overseas are misleading students.

Pagsin said she had spoken with two practical nursing graduates who failed to get work in the United States, to find jobs promised by their school.

She said an excerpt from their letter: "Being a licensed practical nurse is definitely not a way to enter the US, as what is being claimed by practical nursing schools in the country. Like us and a relatively increasing number of fellow Philippine-educated (practical nurses), we cannot be treated working visas as immigrant visas by the US."

CHEd's billion

The PNA also lamented the failure of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to crack down on mediocre nursing schools.

Lorenzo, citing a recent Commission on Audit report, said the CHED had failed to close down even one fly-by-night school.

Currently, not one nursing school was closed by CHED. We think some of those schools are very active in fake ads," she said.

CBCP: Poor's bitterness rising

From page A1

Frederick Pabillo said in a press conference he conducted along with other CBCP members.

Pabillo warned that the bitterness, if not addressed, could escalate into something bigger than could threaten the national leadership.

"I don't see something [being] organized, but anger has been observed. The people have an many grievances and, you know, that could be ignited," said Pabillo, who chairs the CBCP's National Secretariat for Social Action-Justice and Peace.

"If the people are really angry and cannot take their hardships anymore, they can be easily incited by anyone who wants to rule. I hope we can avoid that," he said.

The press conference was held at the San Carlos Seminary in Makati City, where CBCP leaders and their public sector partners were holding the second and last day of the National Rural Congress.

The bishops said the Rural Congress, the second held in the country in the past 40 years, was looking into the problems faced by the marginalized members of society and the lack of government response to their grievances.

Hard to buy food

Pabillo, who also serves as the bishop of Ipil, Zamboanga Sibugay, said life had been "difficult" for the poor.

"They find it hard to buy food. The prices of all goods have risen and their salaries are stagnant. They are really feeling the brunt of it. There are also no jobs (to be had)," he said.

In June, the inflation rate surged to 11.4 percent from a year ago—the highest in 34 months. Prices of food and nonalcoholic drinks jumped by 13 percent, and that of food in general, by 17.4 percent.

Pabillo likewise said the poor had become disillusioned and resentful and were feeling that the government had abandoned them.

He said rides and subsidies...such as the one the PNO already for Metro gave—could actually work to appease the poor's anger, but only temporarily.

The bishops said the government could start addressing the matter by fast-tracking the review of the oil deregulation law and the expanded value-added tax (VAT) law, which, they said, were grossly affecting the poor in the provinces and cities.

Only on Monday, the CBCP president, Archbishop Angel Lagdameo of Jaro, Iloilo, aired a call to the Arroyo administration to reevaluate the two laws.

"We agree that there should be an economic review of policies and laws that affect the prices of goods. Because to any increase in the prices of commodities, the ones who suffer more are the poor," Lagdameo said.

Displacement in Cavite

At yesterday's press conference, Bishop Luis Antonio Tagle of Imus, Cavite, said he had also observed a sense of disappointment among the people in the province, where industrial zones stand on what were once agricultural areas.

According to Tagle, the government did not provide safety nets to help displaced workers in Cavite cope with the new realities.

He said that while the conversion of agricultural lands into industrial complexes had created jobs, it had also displaced many agricultural workers. "One sector is being displaced but it doesn't get enough attention."

Bishop Pedro Dávid of Pampanga said the CBCP Rural Congress was also meeting with the people were disappointed in the socioeconomic of laws.

"There someone refuses to that there are laws, because is being followed. So one of our problems really is good governance," David said.

Bishop expressed apprehension that new economic measures might move close to the CBCP call for a review of the oil deregulation and VAT laws.

"The study might be too long and delay the solution. The people would just suffer more," he said.

Pabillo said the CBCP was not giving ultimatums to officials "a deadline."

"They have limitations, and they should be sensitive enough to realize that the people are suffering. The longer they delay this, the more difficult it is to find a solution. They should take it urgently," he said.

Asked whether the bishops had specific provisions in the two laws in mind, Pabillo and Archbishop Antonio Ledesma of Cagayan de Oro said the CBCP had "no technical-legal solution" and was leaving the issue to the economic managers.

"That is why we are explaining our principles, [which demand] that each person should be given his basic needs [to allow him] to lead a dignified life," they said.

FREE FOOD Children lined up for free rice porridge over the weekend at the Bantay compound. Organized by student volunteers from De La Salle University, Manila, the feeding program was at the same time their protest action against the relentless rise in food and fuel prices. AP/STR

'Ingredients of disaster'

The Protestant National Council of Churches of the Philippines (PNCCP) yesterday added its voice to the CBCP call for a review of the oil deregulation and VAT laws.

"In joining the call, the NCCP affirms its opposition to those twin policies from the beginning. These are ingredients of a social disaster," it said in a statement.

"We appeal to our legislators to shelve for the crisis of the growing majority of suffering people. Repeal the oil deregulation law. Scrap the 12-percent E-VAT [enactment that protects the citizens of this republic and ensure the survival of future generations. The people deserve no less," it said.

Monday was the first time the Catholic bishops collectively expressed opposition to the oil deregulation law. They said soaring oil prices had put basic commodities further from the reach of the poor.

They also said the VAT had become too oppressive for many Filipinos.

Pampanga Archbishop Oscar Cruz and Cabanatuan Bishop Sofio Ignacio, who had previously called for the suspension of the VAT, said it had increased the number of people living in poverty.

At the Palace, President Macapagal-Arroyo ordered the consolidation of her administration's social reform programs, saying "there is still room to generate social impact if other areas are pruned."

"[This is to allow the programs to] diversify address the impact of the adverse global environment," the President said in a statement she read before the start of yesterday's Cabinet meeting.

Under Administrative Order No. 233, existing programs of the social welfare and development department, the Government Service Insurance System, the Social Security System and other agencies concerned with social welfare will be clustered into a reduced social reform program.

Navi to SSS

Ms Arroyo said the clustering would be headed by the SSS administrator, who would be "granted Cabinet rank."

Yesterday, Rumsfeld Navi was named by President Arroyo to head the SSS.

Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya said Ms Arroyo wanted the social reform programs consolidated to ensure that those who would be benefited efficiently and would benefit the poor.

Andaya said AO 233 would also prevent overlapping among the programs. He cited as instance the Department of Education's Food for School program, which could overlap with the social welfare department's conditional cash transfer program.

"It's making sure there are no leakages, and that the programs are the rightful ones," he said.

Andaya also said the existing social reform programs under the 2008 budget remained to serve 2nd billion. With a report from Cheche G. Arevalo

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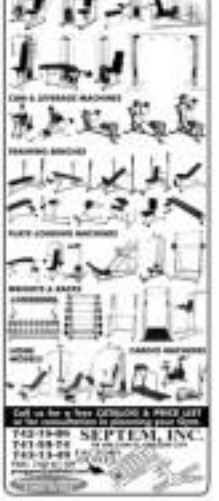
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A 22 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER WEDNESDAY, JULY 9, 2008

NEWS

Terror netted Abu ₱1.4B since '92

By Alcuin Papa

THE ABU SAYYAF GROUP HAS AMASSED AN ESTIMATED P1.4 billion from its criminal activities from 1992 to 2007, a police terrorism expert said yesterday.

Chief Supt. Rodolfo Mendoza told a forum on terrorist financing that a huge chunk of the P1.4 billion, or 97 percent, came from kidnap-for-ransom activities.

The rest came from extortion activities (P18 million), non-government organizations framing by international terror groups (P18 million), and another P20 million from their share of the coke, a condiment vendor coordinator that each retailer is expected to pay to a local manager or charitable organization for distribution to poor and deserving people.

"Kidnapping is a major source of funding for terrorist groups such as the ASG," Mendoza said in his presentation.

Mendoza said that in the 2000 Sipadan kidnap-for-ransom spree, the ASG raised about P1 billion. The money was used to buy high-powered firearms and to sponsor more criminal operations, including bombings in Central Mindanao and even Metro Manila, he said.

He said ASG leaders keep for themselves a significant portion of the funds obtained from these criminal activities, using them to support their families.

"A significant share of the loot is used for their families. Actual participants [in a kidnapping] are the priority," Mendoza said.

The police official said the ASG took in millions of pesos from extortion activities during the early 1990s. The victims were usually small businessmen in Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Zamboanga, some of whom were killed when they refused to cooperate. The first two provinces are areas where the ASG is known to operate.

"Extortion almost crippled the economy of Sinubu, Sulu [and Zamboanga] when the ASG strengthened their extortion activities. Several business establishments closed due to extortion," he said.

From early 2000 to 2003, the ASG began establishing links with the Jemaah Islamiyah, a Southeast Asian terror group with ties to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida international terror network.

It was at around this time that the ASG began to extort money from big transport and shipping companies, Mendoza said.

It was the ordeal of the Super Ferry management to give in to ASG extortionists' demands that led to the February 2004 bombing of the Superferry 14, the biggest sea-borne terror attack in the country.

Mendoza has recommended that government agencies closely screen NGOs to see if they are fronts for terror groups.

He also said that law enforcement agencies take the lead in hostage negotiations and should note the situation into the eventual rescue of the hostages.

"It is only in our country where we see politicians and other personalities getting involved in hostage negotiations. In other countries, that is not allowed," he said.

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Shorter hours for Taguig's night spots

New city ordinance also regulates liquor sales, drinking in public

By Julie M. Aurelio

AFTER A MAULING INCIDENT LAST MONTH IN THE Embassy bar at Bonifacio Global City in Taguig, the City Council has unanimously approved an ordinance which requires the city's night spots to close their doors by 2:30 a.m.

Councilor Ervin Monalli told the Inquirer yesterday that the legislation was passed on second reading on Monday afternoon.

The councilors decided to forgo with the third reading after Ordinance 36 was approved unanimously. It is expected to take effect 15 days after its publication in community bulletins.

"Under this ordinance, non-residential areas would have to close down by 2:30 a.m. or else face temporary closure and an investigation by the city government," Monalli said.

First-time violators would be issued a warning while repeat offenders face the penalty of being slapped with a temporary closure order.

The ordinance also regulates the sale and serving of liquor and alcoholic beverages in establishments such as restaurants, bars, clubs, videoke clubs, cafes, hotels and other similar establishments.

According to Monalli, these night spots should be shut from 2:30 a.m. to 6 a.m.

"The purpose in the city are is in our of this ordinance for it would assure the safety of the children," he said. The same ordinance also requires "hari-cart" (variety) and convenience stores to sell liquor only up to 2 a.m.

It also prohibits establishments, dealers and retailers from selling and delivering alcoholic drinks between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m., except when given a special permit that extends allowable trade hours to 2 a.m.

Business establishments that violate provisions of the ordinance will be issued a temporary closure order, pending appropriate investigation. The closure order shall become permanent upon confirmation of the violations.

Business Permits and License Officer Jose Edward Joelle Mingliana said the ordinance was drafted after a brawl inside the Embassy bar last involving one of its dentists and a "bubble dresser" customer.

"Based on police records, brawls and fights outside bars occur after the closing hours," he pointed out in a phone interview.

The bar was subsequently ordered shut by Taguig Mayor Sigfrido "Freddie" Tinga on June 28. It has not reopened since.

Minglana said the ordinance would mainly affect establishments operating in Bonifacio Global City as their peak hours are usually from 1 a.m. to 4 a.m.

There are about 13 such establishments operating inside The Fort, but Monalli said he is confident that the ordinance would be well received.

"The other establishments won't be affected that much. If their profit goes down, so does our tax lump sums and earlier," he added.

Vice Mayor George Elias, meanwhile, insisted that they are not trying to drive away businesses from the city.

"In fact, we are trying to live up to our name as the most business-friendly city by ensuring a safe environment not only for investors but the public as well," he said.

The ordinance also metes out penalties to persons caught drinking in public places. They face a fine of P500 to P1,000 for the first offense and will be asked to render a day of community service.

For the second offense, the violator will be made to pay a fine of P1,000 to P2,000 and render days of community service. For the third offense, the penalty will be a P3,000 to P5,000 fine and a week of community service.

Prosecution presents new witnesses in Leviste case

By DJ Yap

SENIOR STATE PROSECUTOR EMMANUEL Velasco said his next set of witnesses against former Batangas Gov. Jose Antonio Leviste, who is on trial for the murder of his aide, Rafael de las Alas, would "erase and fortify the remaining ifes" made by the defense.

The prosecution will present today more rebuttal evidence against Leviste before Judge Elmo Alameda of the Makati Regional Trial Court (Branch 150), after gave Velasco another chance to do so after he failed to attend the last hearing.

Velasco did not identify his witnesses, only saying they would try to discredit the testimony of the defense witnesses.

On the other hand, Leviste's lawyers Henry Capulo said they were not bothered by the court's decision to accept more evidence from the prosecution.

"From the start, we were prepared, whether they continue their presentation of rebuttal evidence or we begin ours," he said in a phone interview.

Capulo, however, said he would take steps to question Velasco's witnesses, and would still bite for any sign of corroborative or repetitive evidence.

Velasco previously said he would reduce the number of his rebuttal witnesses from 18 to just five, including a doctor who would testify that De las Alas had been shot at point-blank range.

The other witnesses, on the other hand, would debunk statements made by the defense that De las Alas drank and smoked, and that he had an iced candy bar with on the day he was killed, Velasco added.

Capulo had argued that such a line of witness had already been made by other prosecution witnesses who took the stand earlier.

Alameda previously said the prosecution had "abandoned or waived" its right to present more evidence when Velasco failed to attend the June 25 hearing.

But he set aside the order after Velasco appealed the ruling and argued that his absence had been caused by "pure human error."

Leviste is on trial for shooting De las Alas on Feb. 12, 2007 in his office at the Lyric Tower in Legaspi Village, Makati City. He continued to the crime but said he did it in self-defense.

DID YOU KNOW

In 2007, Metro Manila was the country's most densely populated region, with 11.55 million persons living in a 67.8-square kilometer area (17,000 persons per square kilometer). This represents a 16.3-percent increase from the population density in the year 2000 (9,817 persons per square kilometer).

Cyril Katrina B. Inquirer Research

NOTHING FISHY HERE
Fish sales may be down in other parts of the country due to the sinking of a passenger ship off Romblon province, although this's not the case in Pasayan City. At the Dampa market, fish and other seafood products continue to sell briskly.

Feeding program to benefit kids from 2 QC barangays

By Marlon Ramos

GOOD NEWS FOR POOR residents of two barangays in Quezon City.

Two private companies have donated P120,000 each to Kristo Liguo and Old Balara to fund their feeding programs for malnourished schoolchildren in the two communities.

During the signing of a memorandum of agreement in City Hall last week, barangay officials received the cash donations from representatives of Fuyoh Commonwealth and World Best Industrial Sales Inc.

The feeding program, which will be supervised by the QC Administrator's Office (AVITP), is part of a citywide campaign to fight malnutrition among students in public elementary schools, said Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr.

In a statement, Belmonte said he directed other local government agencies to help AVITP in providing nutritious snacks every day to 90,000 pupils at school to benefit the academics, but their parents as well.

Gov't TV employees seek GMA help in issues vs network

By Marlon Ramos

EMPLOYEES OF A GOVERNMENT-owned television network have sought the help of President Macapagal-Arroyo and the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP) on alleged irregularities being committed by their officials.

In a letter to the Arroyo dated July 2, members of the People's Television Employees Association (PTEA) of the National Broadcasting Network-4 (NBN-4) expressed dismay over the way their officials, who are Malacañang appointees, are running the TV station.

They also accused NBN general manager Jose Isabelo and chair Rolando Reyes of "abuse of power" for allegedly arbitrarily withholding their financial benefits and salary increase since 2006 which, they said, were contained in the collective negotiation agreement (CBA).

"Such display of mismanagement by Presidential appointees gives a bad reflection on your good office especially on your call to fight poverty and maintain good governance," read the letter signed by PTEA president Honor Banda.

Banda said he and other PTEA officers met with senior Malacañang officials, including Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita and Presidential Management Staff Assistant Secretary Dutch Junia last month to try to solve the problem.

Despite Ermita's order to iron out the issues they raised, Banda claimed Isabelo and Reyes did not act on their complaints.

In a separate letter to the NUJP, Banda said Isabelo concurrently used NBN's supposed fiscal woes as a justification for withholding employee benefits.

He also listed down 15 "ill practices" which Reyes and Isabelo allegedly committed since they took over the helm of NBN in 2005, including the delay in the payment of salaries and the remittance of premiums to the Government Service Insurance System and the hiring by some officials of their relatives, friends and former colleagues from ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.

Sought for comment, Isabelo denied the accusations against him, saying PTEA's actions could be linked to its unfinished elections this year and the group's "close relationship" with the Confederation for Unity, Recognition and Advancement of Government Employees, a militant group.

"Maybe the incumbent officers want to produce results for the employees. I don't take it against them," he said in a telephone interview.

Isabelo said he had organized the network's employees association when he chaired, was surprised when told that NBN employees receive a higher pay compared to other government workers.

Girl, 3, raped by fellow street dweller in QC

By Jeannette I. Andrade

A 3-YEAR-OLD GIRL WAS RAPED by a man who also beat her up by banging her head against a stone wall in Quezon City.

With a huge bruise on her forehead, a cut above the left eye and strangulation marks around her neck, the victim, accompanied by her mother, went to the police station 10 in the morning to file a complaint against her alleged abuser whom she identified only as "Boy."

The victim's mother said the suspect was a street dweller just like them. The victim and her family live on E. Rodriguez Boulevard near the corner of Monte de Piedad Street, Barangay Immaculate Conception in Cubao.

The girl's mother told police investigators that they were sleeping at around 3 a.m. on Sunday when she woke up and noticed that her daughter was missing. "I found her lying bloodied on a nearby street," the told, adding that she immediately sought the help of barangay officials.

The girl later told her mother about her ordeal. Barangay tanods Peter Tim Cabuag accompanied the two to Camp Crame where the victim was examined by the medical staff.

"The medico-legal findings showed that she had been raped before, and the Sunday incident was the fifth time," Cabuag said.

He said they were advised to wait for the test results before proceeding to the Kamuning police station, the reason why they reported the incident to the police only yesterday.

Cabuag said the victim's family used to live in a dilapidated community on F. Manalo Street in Cubao which was razed by fire several months ago.

"They were already given financial assistance to help them relocate, but they chose to stay and live on the street," he explained.

Six persons who also live in units parked on E. Rodriguez Boulevard were invited for questioning by QCPD investigators.

They were later released after they were cleared of any involvement in the incident.

LOOKING THROUGH MANNY'S EYES
A crowd is seen through the eyes of boxing champ Manny Pacquiao...literally. It is not Pacquiao himself, but a mask bearing his likeness, distributed during a recent parade in his honor.

TIM ACHIEVES SECOND ISO 9001 CERTIFICATION on QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Renewal extends TIM's certification for the next 3 years

Tatic Information Management (TIM) Corporation, a leading information Technology company in the Philippines, announced recently that it has successfully renewed its ISO 9001 certification.

"Having been ISO 9001-certified for the second time speaks well of TIM's customer-driven commitment," said Jose Mari Antunez, President and CEO at TIM Corp. "We live and work with the philosophy of continuous improvement in the way we provide our IT products and services, with total customer satisfaction as our ultimate objective."

The renewal of ISO 9001 certification ensures providers for TIM's offerings in Business Recovery Solutions Integration and IT Outsourcing. Being awarded with such distinction provides added value for TIM clients. Aside from being an indisputable guarantee of service quality, this certification also ensures regular audit of the TIM's efforts at improving its products and services.

TIM is a 100% Filipino-owned IT company established in 1985. It provides hardware, software, maintenance, business recovery, system integration and outsourcing services to some of the country's largest enterprises. First certified in 2005 by TÜV SÜD Philippines, Inc., this marks TIM's 4th year as an ISO 9001 certified company.

ISO 9001 is considered as the global quality standard for companies that implement continuous improvement in delivering products and services to customers. This certification helps both product and service oriented organizations achieve standards of quality that are recognized and respected throughout the world.

TIM REMAINS ISO-9001 CERTIFIED
TIM Corporation recently received its ISO 9001 Certification recently, moving up 10 slots to 4th place as an ISO 9001-certified company. Photo shows TIM President and CEO Jose Mari Antunez (third from left) posing by the ISO 9001 quality seal mounted at TIM's headquarters. With him (from left) are Alexander Perez - Operations Manager for Business Recovery Services; Salvador Aquio - Senior Vice President; and Marie Velasco - Vice President.

Parañaque bats for trikes' switch to LPG

By Julie M. Aurelio

PARAÑAQUE MAYOR FLORENCIO BEH-ASE JR. is encouraging tricycle drivers in his city to switch to liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) to cut down on spiraling cost amid rising fuel prices.

Belmonte recently asked tricycle drivers to post campaigns at the back of their vehicles explaining the benefits of using LPG during the launching of the TODA Right-thing campaign last month.

"Through this campaign, we can inform more people of our health services and programs, as well as the economical and environmental advantages of LPG conversion," the mayor explained.

The campaign will not only entail the benefits of LPG, but also the city government's health programs.

Belmonte launched the TODA Right-thing campaign last week in coordination with the City Health Office, the Tricycle Regulatory Office (TRO) and the Federation of Parañaque Tricycle Drivers and Operators Association headed by Edmund Bautista.

City Health Office head Olga Virtusio said the campaigns will include detailed information on programs such as family planning, immunization, nutrition, dental services, social hygiene, maternal health services, prevention of dengue, cancer and diabetes, rabies immunization, health and sanitation services, blood donation and eye care.

TRO chief Rony Paguidan said they have intensified their drive to encourage more tricycle drivers to convert to LPG.

The city government is tapping its tricycle associations all over the city to help in the health information campaign.

METROBRIEFS

Man loses money, life

A PASIG DRIVER who got money while gambling also ended up losing his life after he was stabbed repeatedly in the stomach by a still unidentified attacker yesterday. Rudy Portalita, 42, a resident at 2731-I Bambilio corner Sunog Apoy Sts. in Bagong Ilog, Pasig, was declared dead on arrival at the Pasig Rizal Provincial Medical Center, PCR Jay Santos of the Manila Police District homicide section said the victim went to a neighbor's wake and left after losing money while gambling. He was later heard shouting for help and emerged from his house, clutching his stomach. Santos said there was a possibility that Portalita may have known his attacker.

Elison G. Lopez

Guard kills self over debts

A SECURITY guard was found dead yesterday morning in an apparent case of suicide, investigators said. Alejandro Caparas, who worked for a credit card company, shot himself in the head to escape his debtors, the police said. According to PO2 Rolando Lipata, the victim's brother-in-law Encarnacion Andres recently gave Caparas P5,000 to settle a debt but the latter allegedly used the money to gamble. Caparas, a resident of Barangay Ugong, Valenzuela City, was found dead at the Bankard office located at the 20th floor of the Equitable Towers in Ortigas Center, Pasig City. Lipata said a three-page suicide letter was found on a table near the victim's body. Based on the suicide note, Caparas's debtors had repeatedly tried to collect from him but he was not able to pay them. The police investigator said: The letter was signed by the victim and the signature seemed to be authentic because it looked similar to Caparas's signature in the guard logbook, he added. "It's similar but we have to further investigate and bring it to a handwriting expert to finally rule out foul play and declare suicide," the policeman said. He added that the letter was addressed to the victim's wife.

Mary C. Cayapot

Tambuyog general assembly

THE TAMBUYOG Development Center, a non-government organization in the fisheries sector, will hold its 11th general assembly on July 19, 2 p.m. to 5 p.m., at Acacia Point, Scout Barromeo, Mind Triangle, Quezon City. Under the banner "Building Bare Basic Organizing Strategies," the assembly aims to redefine Tambuyog's vision and mission and restructure its programs. A 20-year vision and strategic plan will be discussed and approved, together with a five-year medium term plan. A new board of trustees will be elected. Tambuyog seeks to advance community property rights and promote the sustainable development of fisheries resources. It is also part of the current struggle for global food security. Registration starts at 12:30 p.m. For further information, contact Nida Morris, 9266500, telefax 9266415 or e-mail admin@tambuyog.org.

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The WORLD

Edna Lorenne B. Baens

Escalating oil, food prices threaten economy, G8 warns

TOYAKO, JAPAN—EIGHT OF THE WORLD'S MOST powerful leaders called on Tuesday for efforts to cool sizzling oil prices, warning soaring fuel and food costs were a threat to world economic growth.

The Group of Eight rich nations said they were ready to take action to cushion global growth from mounting commodity costs.

But they stopped short of announcing concrete steps to calm jumpy markets on the economy discussed on the second day of a summit in this spa resort in northern Japan.

The G8—Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States...said they remained concerned about the long-term resilience of their economies, noting that emerging economies were still powering strongly.

But the world economy was "facing uncertainty" and risks to growth remained.

They expressed "strong concern" about oil and food prices, which they said "pose a serious challenge to stable growth worldwide, have serious implications for the most vulnerable and increase global inflationary pressure."

The threats from inflation, which has led to protests worldwide, has become the top economic concern for the major industrialized nations.

The G8 called for an increase in oil production and refining capacity to help stem soaring crude prices, which have soared five-fold since 2002.

"We have strong concerns about the sharp rise in oil prices, which poses risks to the global economy," the leaders said.

"On the supply side, production and refining capacities should be increased in the short term," they said, calling for "concerted efforts" to address the underlying causes of the spike in crude prices to above $140 a barrel.

The G8's remarks had little immediate impact on oil prices, which were up almost a dollar a barrel in Asian trade.

The highest cost of fuel and food has led to protests worldwide, from tens of thousands of truck drivers striking in Spain and Portugal to street rallies in Asia and cities in Egypt and Haiti.

The statement made no mention of the weakness of the US economy, although US President George W. Bush told fellow G8 leaders he was committed to "a strong dollar."

"The president, of course, reaffirmed his constant desire to have a strong dollar and his commitment to a strong dollar," said Dan Price, Bush's assistant for international economic affairs.

Other G8 leaders did not comment on Bush's remarks on the dollar, a Japanese foreign ministry official told reporters.

Analysts say a weaker dollar is contributing to surges in oil prices, which are priced in the US currency, partly because investors have been buying oil as a hedge against a slide of the greenback.

But leaders met little immediate prospect of coordinated market interventions by the G8 to prop up the greenback as European nations may be reluctant to see their own currencies slide as that could stoke inflation.

AFP

THAKSIN Shinawatra AFP

Thaksin on trial for graft

BANGKOK—THAILAND'S FUGITIVE billionaire former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra on trial for corruption on Tuesday, almost two years after he was toppled from power in a military coup.

Thaksin and his wife Pojaman, loved by the poor and loathed by the Bangkok elite, were not on hand at the Supreme Court for the opening of a legal saga that could put them behind bars for 15 years.

The case is only one of many being launched against Thaksin and his allies, and threatens to bog down a new government—led by Thaksin loyalists—which is already having many pressures to the streets.

The Supreme Court is considering whether Thaksin, a self-made tycoon who now owns English football side Manchester City, illegally arranged for his wife to buy a prime chunk of Bangkok real estate. He and his wife have pleaded not guilty to all charges.

Thaksin was ousted from power by royalist generals in the military, who accused him of widespread corruption, undermining the country's democracy and insulting Thailand's revered king.

AFP

Iran stages war games, nixes nuke demand

TEHRAN—IRAN STARTED war games on Monday and its president rejected a demand by major powers that it stop enriching uranium as "illegitimate," showing no sign of backing down in a standoff over Tehran's nuclear ambitions.

Missile tests of the elite Revolutionary Guards' naval and air forces began two days, Iranian news agencies said, hours after the US Navy said it had begun exercises in the Gulf.

Speculation arose an attack on the world's fourth biggest oil exporter over its nuclear program even after a report last month said Israel had sanctioned such a strike. Fears of military confrontation helped send world oil prices to record highs.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said on Monday his country would not stop enriching uranium, which Tehran says is aimed at generating power but which the West fears may be part of a covert nuclear weapons program.

It was Ahmadinejad's first comment on the Group's three-hour deliberations in response on Saturday to a package of limited incentives offered by world powers seeking an end to its nuclear activities.

Details of the response were not made public.

Reuters

NEW WORLD HERITAGE SITE
A file picture dated Dec. 19, 2007, shows a Saudi man walking at the Archaeological Site of Al-Hijr, also known as Madain Saleh, in northern Saudi Arabia, which was added on July 6 to Unesco's World Heritage List. Al-Hijr, the largest conserved site of the civilization of the Nabataeans south of Petra in Jordan, is the first World Heritage site in Saudi Arabia. Unesco's World Heritage Committee added three natural and three cultural sites to its heritage list, including a former slave hideout in Mauritius, China's Fujian Tulou earthen houses and the Saudi Nabataean site.

AFP

Saudis' 'slave' treatment of migrant women condemned

JEDDAH, SAUDI ARABIA—Saudi families are abusing female migrant workers to the point of slavery and Riyadh needs to respond with sweeping labor and justice reforms, a major rights group said on Sunday.

US-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) said in a new report released to Indonesia that many Saudis believed they "owned" their foreign domestic workers and treated them like chattel.

"Saudis treat them like chattel, slaves, like exotic. A domestic worker is like a slave and slaves have no rights," the report quoted a "senior consular official" with a foreign embassy in the kingdom as saying.

The 133-page report entitled "As If I Am Not Human": Abuses against Asian Domestic Workers in Saudi Arabia," was compiled after two years of research, the group said.

The work included 92 interviews with domestic workers, officials, and labor recruiters in Saudi Arabia and the workers' countries of origin, it said.

Out of 90 domestic workers interviewed, HRW concluded that 56 faced abuse that amounted to forced labor, trafficking or slavery-like conditions.

Some of the cases were horrific.

"Employers often take away passports and lock workers in the home, increasing their isolation and risk of psychological, physical, and sexual abuse," HRW said in a statement.

It said Saudi labor laws included domestic workers, as many never leave for a week 18 hours a day, seven days a week—often without pay—for years. Sleeping quarters included closets and bathrooms.

AFP

BULL RUN
Participants run ahead of Cebada Gago fighting bulls on the second day of the San Fermin festival on July 8 in Pamplona, northern Spain. On each day of the festival, six bulls are released at 8 a.m. to run from their corrals through the narrow, cobbled streets of the old town over an 850-meter course.

AFP

Obama's plane makes emergency landing

WASHINGTON—A CHARTERED airliner carrying Democratic White House hopeful Barack Obama was forced to make an unscheduled landing on Monday in St. Louis after its flight crew detected mechanical problems.

The twin-engined Midwest Airlines MD-87 jet was diverted to midwestern Missouri, during a flight from Chicago to North Carolina, after the pilots noticed problems with pitch control, which keep the aircraft in level flight.

An inspection on the ground revealed that the rear emergency evacuation slide had deployed inside the tail cone during flight, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) said.

After the plane landed safely, Obama and pilots noticed something was not working properly aboard the plane, which was carrying 40 passengers and crew including campaign staff, Secret Service agents and journalists.

"Surprise: a pilot says that something's not working the way it's supposed to, then you know, you make sure you tighten your seatbelt," he told reporters.

"Everything seemed under control, the pilots know what they are doing."

The pilot of the Midwest jet told passengers they were never in danger and did not need to adopt the emergency brace position when the plane was back on land, television networks reported.

The NTSB said in a statement that the pilots first noticed the controls were sluggish when they took the plane off autopilot to manually fly several coursework of thunderstorms.

An NTSB investigator was dispatched to St. Louis to investigate the incident, and plans also to arrive later on Monday.

AFP

Austrian gov't collapses; snap poll set

VIENNA—AUSTRIA'S GOVERNing coalition collapsed on Monday and a snap election looked set for September after conservatives chief declared they could no longer work with the Social Democrats of Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer.

Accused of poor leadership and scapegoats within his own ranks, Gusenbauer said he would not seek confirmation as chancellor and recommended acting party chief Werner Faymann for the job, a shuffle expected to be approved.

The conservative People's Party denounced an early election for the sake of "clarity" in government.

"Enough is enough. Good work in this government is no longer possible," party chief Wilhelm Molterer, who is also vice chancellor and finance minister, told a news conference.

"The Social Democrats are without orientation or leadership. We can't let the Social Democratic crisis become an Austrian crisis."

Should the conservatives win the next election, as polls now suggest, Austria could resume privatization of state-owned firms including Telekom Austria and Austrian Airlines. Shares in both companies fanned on Monday.

A conservative-led government is also likely to continue pension and tax reforms it started during its previous reign.

Austria's two major parties have been in a "grand coalition" since January 2007, after the Social Democrats edged out the incumbent conservatives in the last elections. But the government has been hobbled by policy feuds over health, taxes, pensions and schools.

"The truth is that the 2006 election result was never really accepted [by the conservatives]," Gusenbauer told reporters.

"They tried to hinder the government's work over the past 20 months and became the ruling coalition's problem."

Relations boiled over in June after Gusenbauer and Faymann, in a rare show of unity, called for a referendum on Turkey's changes to European Union treaties. Conservatives branded this a populist gamble to reverse a fall in Social Democratic poll ratings.

Reuters

WHAT'S INSIDE
■ **French** bikers forge Tour de France coup /A30

SPORTS
Editor Toddyrie S. Melendres Assistant Editor Francis T.J. Ochoa

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Alaska tries to stay alive

SYM. Lioisel's Dennis Espino wins a foul from Red Bull's Dupes Robinson during their match Sunday. www.pr

By Marlowe R. Castillo

ANTIPOLO—ALASKA's swipe at defending Smart Florte Cup champion rain lumps by a blowout after the two dropped in to the one-onto-you-the wildcard phase that starts today at the Siverio Center here.

The Aces, who won the tournament at the expense of Purefoods in seven pulsating games last year, dug it out with Sta. Lucia in the first of two games they have to win to strike to join the playoff picture where they're sure to be waiting.

Game time is 4:30 p.m. with Alaska, which finished No. 6 in the elimination round topped by Air21, still licking the wounds of a 97-90 loss to Rinders.

Purefoods, the No. 7 squad, is also in the same boat, with the Tender Juicy Giants scheduled to lock horns with the eighth-seeded Talk 'N Text side in the 7:30 p.m. main game.

Willard Avenue will be the scenes of these two games to advance opposite each other and draw the Gin Kings to the brink of three quarterfinal round.

Magnolia and Coca-Cola are the teams in the other pairing.

The Aces made a late run at one of the automatic berths in the playoffs, but couldn't getting themselves to overcome for an even split Final Four will after winning six straight games in one point in the elimination.

But keen to two of their last three games deemed the Aces, who have the shortest bench in the field in Ritchi Holcomb, an all-around talent who has been working hard but has not gotten the results he wants for Alaska.

Willie Miller, the reigning Most Valuable Player, veteran Jeffrey Cariaso and starting point guard LA Tenorio will be the main supporting cast for Holcomb. Jessay Thiele will man the center position for The Cuss and will

GAME TODAY
(Siverio Center, Antipolo)
4:30 p.m.—Alaska vs Sta. Lucia
7:30 p.m.—Purefoods vs Talk 'N Text

have Jaw Reason as his reinforcement.

Sta. Lucia dropped to the crucial because of its poor woes, with Boone Schultz being the Realtors' third import for the four

season.

The reigning Philippine Cup champions closed out its elimination round schedule with a 7-11 slate and is the lowest-ranked team in the wildcard.

Aside from Boone, Jeffe Williams and Ryan Boone will again have to take over if the Realtors want to extend the daughter of advancing. Dennis Espino, Dench Miranda and even Joseph Yeo are the other vital elements in the Sta. Lucia game.

James Yap and Kelly Nuyumalo, meanwhile, will again be Purefoods' 1-2 offensive option, with help in the middle coming from 7-foot import Sean Rudiser and Jaro Simon to again come off the bench.

Purefoods led most close games in the eliminations but will have its hands full against the Phone Pals, whose six games losing streak in the middle of the first phase dragged them deep into the standings.

Terrence Leeches, who exploded for 40 points against the Red Bull Barako last week, will be a marked man by Talk 'N Text.

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Norwood signs up for PBA draft

Hapee star submits papers, needs only DOJ affirmation

By Jasmine W. Payo

LARGE NORWOOD, THE SOLE NATIONAL FILIPINO-AMERICAN WHO STARRED FOR the national squad and for Hapee Toothpaste in the Philippine Basketball League, has applied for the PBA draft, the league's Media Bureau said yesterday.

The PBA Commissioner's Office had given foreign-trained Filipinos until yesterday to apply for the draft, which takes place on Aug. 31.

Jared Dillinger, who is currently seeking action for the Barangay Bataan in the Liga Filipinas, also beat the deadline for application, along with Charlie Weis.

Blazer is a relative of Sta. Lucia top gun Kelly Williams.

Norwood was a last-minute recruit for the national team that played in the Phil-Asia Olympic qualifying tournament in Fukushima, Japan last year. That team, coached by Chot Reyes, finished ninth in the tournament.

The former George Mason U star is the 11th NCAA Div.1 player to apply for the draft, following in the footsteps of Ryan Reyes, Jason Castro, Jeff Chan, Ali Peek, Jonathan Fernandez, Jason Canlas, Jason Ballesteros, Jason Ibañez, Jason Perkins and Jason Salcedo.

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Castro is set to leave for Australia today to fulfill his contract with the National Basketball League's Singapore Slingers. He will play there until March next year.

He has already left his papers with player agent Danny Espiritu and the PBA board has allowed to participate in the draft despite his absence. The team that picks him will earn his playing rights just in case Castro won't play a second season in Australia and decide to fly home.

Expected to also join the draft are Ateneo Red Bull stars, PCU's Beau Belga and Mapua's Edwin dela Pena.

The rookies will attend a training camp before the draft.

EASE Norwood is set to bring his slam-dunking skills to the PBA.

RP batters triumph; delegation bloated?

By Jane Navarro

BANDALAN BIG LEAGUE (14-18) ADED BALcoloff Junior League (13-14) moved a win shy of clinching World Series story after scoring a 9-0 romp victory in the Asia Pacific girls softball championship hosting regulation victory Guangzhou, China on Tuesday.

As this developed, a sports official discovered that at least 15 members of the bloated delegation should not have been in China at all.

The discovery comes at the heels of a controversy over the assignment of Team Bacolod's $6,000 (P300,000) tournament fee which the Philippine Sports Commission initially shouldered.

Alanda scored a repeat win over Indonesia, 13-0, in Game 2 of their best-of-five series in the Big League (14-18) while Bacolod also trailed 2-0 against Guam, 8-6.

Gemelan Tracks, a senior high school student who is making waves in her first international competition, led Manila's five-inning regulation victory as she overwhelmed 13 Indonesian batters in a three-inning stint.

PSC commissioner Eric Lorenzo, after close scrutiny of the 61-man delegation from the Bacolod-based Batangas Lacson National High School, found out that 15 of them were not functional members of the contingent but were included as part of the official entourage.

Lorenzo said each of the three Bacolod teams—major league (11-12), junior league (13-14) and senior league (15-16)—were added five slots in their respective lineups to accommodate the "extra coaches."

"I have contacted the coaches in the lineup," said Lorenzo. "It should have been limited to 15 people per team, including the coaches."

Lorenzo declined to release the list of the jacketeers pending the PSC's investigation on the case.

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SPORTSWATCH

Cebu Nikos pace Liga Pilipinas Tour standings

LIPA CITY—DOUBLE-LIGE RUNNER Cebu Nikos by the Liga Filipinas team stood atop with 24 total points, for flying the Cebu bid for an outright quarterfinal berth with two more stops in their school slot.

The Pampanga Bubbles, who won the second leg before their hometown crowds in San Fernando, ranked second with 20 points, followed by the Pagadian Explorers, champions in the Misamis Oriental leg, with 18 points. Cebu topped Tagbilaran Tagbilaran Bohol, 10 points.

Completing the standings are Misamis Oriental (8), Davao Sur (7), Bagabo (6), Tagaytay-Cavite (6), Laguna (4), Lipa-Batangas (4), Zamboanga (3), Iloilo (2), and Davao (0).

As per tournament format, each of the 12 participating teams—with the top 8 competing in four different legs—will host one qualification-round tourney to complete a total of 12 legs.

Already, Misamis Oriental, Davao Sur, Pampanga, Tagaytay, and Pagadian have played hosts to five concluded legs, with Lipa-Batangas and Zamboanga hosting consecutive at Week 4.

The top four teams with the highest points advance to the quarterfinals.

PCAP Cocker of the Year awarding rites set

GRAND BALLROOM, WILL PRESENTERS' 2008 Pinoy Cockers Association of the Philippines (PCAP) Cocker of the Year Award Saturday at the Makati Coliseum.

Bob Cruz basted 26 other fighting cocks for entry amassed a whopping 28.5 points at the end of the series last Monday.

Jojo Jaringo and Jorge Eguilos finished runner-up during the event.

Meanwhile, Makati Coliseum gears up for another big contest on July 19.

For details, call 8962040 and 8966470.

SJC hosts 3-cock derby

MORE THAN 75 MATCHES WILL BE FEATured in San Juan Coliseum's "Blakbrakan: Former and Color 3-cock derby" today.

The matches start at noon.

The SJC management-Pinoy tournament pits five-cock fights for P250,000 while color has a only P5,000.

Another 3-cock event with the same format takes off on Saturday, July 12.

Likewise, the "Mini Rambolan Pool 3-cock derby" emerges on July 21, 23, 25, 28 and Aug. 2 with a bigger cut and P1.5 million and entry fee of P5,000.

For reservation of cockhouse, call 7266080 and 7266082.

Gomez, So stay 1-2 in qualifier

By Ray Lauren

THE WINNING RUN OF JUDITH-Ismail Wasiur John Paul Gomez and Grandmaster Wesley So stretched to the second round of the National Chess Federation of the Philippines qualifying tournament at the Kalaw ng Mga Bata, in Mandaluyong City.

Gomez trounced GM Buenaventura "Bong" Villamayor in 32 moves of the Dec while So bundled IM Rudy Rudeza in 32 moves of the French Defense to keep their 1-2 positions in the tournament being held to determine the country's bets to the Chess Olympiad in Dresden, Germany, and the World Mind Games in Beijing, China.

His 40th straight win gave the 22-year-old Gomez, a three-time national junior champion, 9.5 points out of a perfect nine as he kept a one-point lead over his nearest eight rounds to go.

The 14-year-old So, the highest-rated Filipino with an 80-12 2377, duplicated his win after a fifth-round set back to fellow GM Darwin Laylo.

Villamayor, winner of last month's Bohemian Open, dropped to a share of third to fourth places with IM Chito Garma, who stunned NM Edmundo Cavas in 31 moves of the Scotch, at 6.0 points.

Subic Open champion GM Joyce Gonzales drew with IM Rolando Sobe in 32 moves of the Closed Ruy Lopez to rise to 5.0 points in the company of Laylo, IM Ronald Bancod and NM Leonardo Carbie.

Laylo halved the point with IM Jerry Sodudo in 26 moves of the Queen's Indian while Bancod and Carbie drew after 31 moves of the Petroff.

Mansilad Open champion GM Mark Paragua notched his third straight win at the expense of NM Noel de la Cruz to climb to 4.5 points.

IM Julio Catalino Sadorra also remained in his third victory, outplaying NM Jose Ubalda in 40 moves of the Sicilian to join Sobe and Sodudo at 6.0 points.

In women's play, Bukay Rivera dumped Rifa Jane Yeong in 29 moves of a Five to share the lead with Sheila Cua, Cristy Bernabe and Catherine Perena. They have 4.0 points each after six rounds.

Rivera 1—(GM)Gomez, Ma. Cielo Vasconcellos (2); Dimpalo (1), Mistina Bulos (1)

Rivera 2—(IM)—Bay Angel (1), Indescallona (4), Nathana Jorne (2)

Rivera 3—(Pawn)(GM)(1)—Tanseng Jhonner (8), Color My World (1), Fearless Nine (1), Log Up (6), Knight Of The Wind (6)

Rivera 4—(GM)(1)—Kitty Gritty (2), Iron Chef (8), Time Enchanted (4), Wrangell (3)

Rivera 5—(Super 6/GM)(1)—Al-Azaan (5), Gorgeous Dawn (3), Diamond For Us (6), Ki-Ever Ever (8), Jackson Jazz (7), Rivalto (1)

Rivera 6—(Pawn)(GM)(1)—Golden Mother (2), Carmelita (4), Golden Fantasy (3), Zacky's Wizard (1), Yanong Bird (6)

Rivera 7—(Pawn)(GM)(1)—Charming Story (3), Sacred Hall (2), Bells Of The Ball (6), 8 Cubanito Cookie (6), Lilac Lang (4)

Rivera 8—(Super 6/GM)(1)—Pearl Rock (11), Air Force One (4), Golden Song (2), Lupita (10), Storm Fast (6), Twelve To Have (7)

BY TOP CHOICE W.O.U.F

Reyes tops Macau karting

DEMOLITIVE FRANCO VICTOR PUEY Reyes of Arc Racing opened the Philippines' championship campaign in the 2008 Asian Karting Open Championships with a convincing win in the 100-cc Yamaha Jr. class at the Kartodromo de Coloane in Macau, China recently.

The 12-year-old ninth grader from the Ateneo de Manila swept both the pre-final and final heats and posted a fastest lap time of 37.422 seconds in the 1.2-kilometer race track. (It was 16.001 seconds close of his winner 8-val at the end of the 15-lap final race.

"I played for good weather on the eve of the finals, and when it cleared up during the warm-up heat, I felt more confident," said Reyes. "The track was drying up fast, so the conditions were improving every lap."

Dubbed the Iron Man of Philippine karting because of his penchant for entering multiple classes in the championships, Reyes rallied from the back of the grid and finished seventh, in the tenth-stronger 123 cc Jr. Shimada Open class.

He was the second highest Filipino finisher, just half a second behind team captain Javi Benitez in sixth place.

Reyes will see action in the second round of the Asian Championships from July 25 to 27 in Carmona Circuit, Cavite.

FRANCO Reyes (near) rides to victory

WINNERS Partners Cup badminton winners show off their prizes with Frederick Go (center), president of Robinsons Land, during the awards rites at the Yuses courts in Mandaluyong City recently. The winners were (from first row) Jason and Richard Escobias (Class A), Vic Bathingcheal and Jesus Dantes (Class B), Pearl de Silva and Alvic Glorioso (Class C), Jory Cambosa and Tina Maligan (Class D) and Raymund Baylon and Phoenix Montano (Class E).

Dottie joins Cyna in US Women's Amateur golf

DOTTIE ARDINA BUCKED A BOGEY FINISH for a one-over 73 and clinched a berth in next month's US Women's Amateur Championship with a season-up finish in the Section 6 Qualifying at the Huntsville Country Club in Lathrop, Stockton, California Monday.

Ardina, pursuing up-for-next week's Junior World in San Diego, stumbled with five bogeys but made four birdies in the day including one on No. 17 that virtually sealed her spot in the US Women's Amateur slated Aug. 4 to 10 in Eugene, Oregon.

She even a missed putter bogey making on the 18th could decide her stint in the tournament proper as she beat 8. Lee and C. Lamarine, both of California, for the second and last spot. Lee and Lamarine finished with identical 74s.

Only the top two players advanced to the US Women's Amateur, including top-notch C. Nicholas Ellis who dominated the field with a two-under 70.

Ardina, who let 12 fairways and 11 greens, thus joined KCDI teammate Cyna Rodriguez who finished joint second in the Sectional Qualifying in Reno, Hawaii, over the weekend.

Mia Pierce, winner of two AJGA (American Junior Golf Association) tournaments in recent months, failed to advance with an 85.

Lions return after 10-day break

San Beda battles PCU; Mapua eyes third straight victory

By Cedrik F. Tupas

THOSE BREAK WERE LONG CONSIDERING

It's a short season. That's why San Beda coach Frankie Lim made sure his Red Lions wouldn't slow layoff.

Whether or not the Red Lions remain sharp after a nearing opening day win will be known today when they renew their 2-day break against the Philippine Christian University Dolphins in the NCAA men's basketball tournament at the Cuneta Astrodome in Pasay City.

"We worked extra dedicated prepared hard for PCU," Lim said on the eve of their 4 p.m. duel with the Dolphins.

"The players were mostly consistent during practice. I think we have accomplished a lot, we maximized our layoff."

The two-time defending champion Red Lions benchmark a mean run-and-gun game to rout the Mapua Cardinals, 85-56, in the first game of the season last June 28 at the Araneta Coliseum.

"We know we might get rusty that's why we practiced hard to avoid that. Plus, the players are excited to play again," added Lim.

Two games into their comeback season, the Dolphins, champions in 2004, have yet to break the winning column. They lost to St. Benilde, 61-64, on opening-day and Mapua, 77-71, Wednesday.

The Cardinals, with a rejuvenated Rebin dela Peña spearheading the charge, shoot for a third straight victory against Perpetual Help at 2 p.m.

But like the Dolphins, the Cardinals are playing their second game in three days.

But Mapua coach Leo Isaac doesn't seem to mind.

"We're okay with the schedule because the players are 100 percent fit," said Isaac, whose team will also play against St. Benilde on Friday. "This is what we prepared for over the past year."

Isaac believes Dela Peña is slowly finding his form, after a sluggish start that saw last year's Most Valuable Player average just nine points in the first two games.

"His comeback is coming back," Isaac said of Dela Peña, who finished with 12 points against the Dolphins. "I understand he was a little super because of the pressure."

STANDINGS	W	L
Lyceu	1	0
Mapua	1	0
St. Benilde	1	0
San Beda	0	1
Perpetual	0	1
PCU	0	1
JRU	0	1

GAMES TODAY
(Cuneta Astrodome)
12 noon - Mapua vs Perpetual Help
2 p.m. - Mapua vs Philippine Christian U
4 p.m. - San Beda vs JRU

SEA Games champion crushes URCC rival

LIKO Tagaog attempts a punch against a kiln Jarin Cruz, who managed to bounce back and hammer out a victory in the Universal Reality Combat Championship (URCC) XII.

CHAMPION WUSHU ATHLETE EDUARDO Polonyo ruined down crushing blows on Caloy Bañares's face to win the Super Fight division of the Universal Reality Combat Championship (URCC) XII at the A. Venue Events Hall in Makati City over the weekend.

A former Southeast Asian Games gold medalist and Asian Games runner-up, the welterweight holder took the win after 2:41 in the opening round.

Bañares, the middleweight kingpin, was helpless as the slugger known around the fight circle as "Lasciñas," came down hard on him.

In the lightweight division, Justin Cruz of Pinkal, Guam stopped Lino "The Terminator" Tagaog of Gym Ezra and Philippine Army's gold medalist.

Kevin Belingon of Lukso Wushu, on the other hand, subdued his flyweight title over Magallon Perez of Kbode Mixed Martial Arts team.

Other campaigns of Hybrid Star Trio also prevailed over Anthony Jeremiah So of MMGC Combat; Carey Bañas of HOLD DEF MMA; burned rival Antonina of Gym Kenz; and Leader Espinosa of Blonde MMA toppled John Nitral.

Other winners were Robert Sardoza of Iron Gladiator over Nicholo Amparo of Iron Pit Arellano, Melchor Arriaga of Team Lyoto over Marlon Abejuma of 3R Xtreme Fighting, Ed Uy of Hybrid Star Trio over Dennis Balsamero of 3R Xtreme Fighting, and Saved Real Addison over Pancleon Estrada of the Blonde MMA.

Mixed martial arts it is full contact combat sport that allows a variety of fighting techniques. Fights takes the use of striking and grappling techniques, both while standing and on the ground.

Archers elevate controversial 'T' to UAAP board

By Cedrik F. Tupas

IT COULD TURN OUT TO BE THE most feared shoot/technical foul of the UAAP in years.

Its La Salle University's use to elevate the technical foul slapped on its coaching staff for their failure to wear their ID to the UAAP Board, but it refuses to say exactly what it wants from the board.

Bro. Benson Dee, the DLSU representative to the UAAP Board, last night told the Inquirer they will submit a letter on the board today but did not reveal what action the school is seeking.

Pressed for details, all Dee told the Inquirer was: "It's not a protest letter."

The closest statement from the La Salle camp regarding the technical foul came from coach Franz Pumaren, who decried the technical foul after the match and said "I just want to know why the rule is selective."

A source in the La Salle camp said the school will go as far as **banking its letter with a video** showing University of Santo Tomas' coaching staff go unpunished despite committing the same infraction in their match versus University of the East at the Araneta Coliseum Saturday.

But Dee did not confirm the presence of such a documentary evidence.

Dee did stress that their letter will not question the outcome of Sunday's game, which went on with Eagles' star Chris Tiu hitting a pair of free throws to seal controversial technical foul and ended with Ateneo on top, 77-73.

As far as Chito Narvasa, this year's UAAP basketball tournament commissioner, is concerned, though, "the case is already closed" since it did not affect the outcome of the game.

But Pumaren added: "How can it be closed when he has not addressed the issue?"

Narvasa said UAAP teams were informed about the strict **implementation of the ID rule** during the June 25 tech's kabuy at the Blue Eagle Gym, which he said La Salle was unable to attend.

Pumaren however said La Salle attended all UAAP meetings.

Narvasa also questioned why La Salle did not give him a copy of the phone recording UST coach Pido Jarencio utilized his ID during Saturday's game. La Salle sent the photo to media outlets, including the Inquirer, last Monday.

Asked what the limits of the technical foul was, Narvasa did not specify, but emphasized that he said that "anything who administers basketball knows that you don't get a technical foul because of that (not wearing ID)."

He, however, refused to further comment on the matter.

"As much as possible, I want to discuss the case with the parties involved," he added.

Roach: Pacquiao will overwhelm Valero with speed

By Roy Luarca

ROACH

MANNY PACQUIAO smothered Israel Vina with his speed on June 28. He'll explode it against Everyone winds up fighting Juan Manuel Marquez in November.

Celebrated trainer Fred. dic Roach made this announcement in an interview with Brad Cooney of BoxingBeat.com on Monday.

"Valero is not a real like guy, so he'll have trouble with Manny's speed," said Roach. "He's a heavy puncher, but he's not so fast, so I think he will have some trouble with Manny."

Though the entire Pacquiao to take on British superstar Ricky Hatton this November following the release of IBF junior welterweight champ Paul Malignaggi to take a step aside in favor of Pacquiao, who entered Ring Boxing Council lightweight crown in Las Vegas.

"It looks like we'll fight Hatton next year, and Valero sometime in November," Roach said, adding that Top Rank president Bob Arum and Golden Boy Promotions' Richard Schaefer are close to sealing the fight tentatively set Nov. 8.

According to Roach, Pacquiao and Valero aren't total strangers since they opposed five years ago with Pacquiao handling the celebrated Venezuelan well.

Roach's main concern is Valero's punching power which has stopped all of his 29 opponents, the first 19 in the first round.

To avoid such a disaster, Roach said he's going to work more on Manny's defense, saying that the Filipino ring icon got hit a few times by Diaz, whom he finished out with 2:24 gone in the ninth round.

Valero, the World Boxing Association super featherweight titlist who is now based in Los Angeles after spending some time in Japan, has reportedly enlisted ex-Pacquiao ex fight Juan Manuel Marquez as his sparring partner.

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Roach added that against Valero, also a southpaw, Pacquiao will basically adopt the same style he used to topple Diaz, another southpaw.

Given a choice, Roach said he would want the Pacquiao-Valero fight to be staged in December since Pacquiao will be very busy catching up with his studies and supporting Filipino athletes in the Beijing Olympics in August.

Regardless of the outcome of negotiations between Arum and Honda, however, Roach said they will be ready for Valero, who's still trying to secure a license to fight in Las Vegas.

If new negotiations fall apart or Valero, who's only allowed to fight in Texas, does not get his license license, Arum said Abraham Nordstrom does will be considered as Pacquiao's next opponent.

Meanwhile, Arum fared to Boxing Confidential that the Pacquiao-Diaz bout generated around 250,000 pay-per-view hits, translating to $12.5 million, in the United States and Canada.

SBP tells PBA: Let's synchronize calendars

By Jaro Navarro

A CALENDAR IN COMPLETE HARMONY with the PBA franchising Basketball ng Pilipinas is what executive director Sol Estavillo wants from the Philippine Basketball Association.

Sols discussed SBP's proposed calendar of events with PBA commissioner Sonny Barrios on Monday, hoping that the pro league would remain in control over conference dates as fit into the tournament timetable of the International Basketball Federation (Fiba).

Sols said Barrios received the proposition with an open mind and promised to give a feedback as soon as he takes up the issue with the PBA board of governors.

"The meeting went basically about the synchronization of the PBA calendar with the Fiba," said Sols, who is unemployed the two-conference format of the PBA during his tenure as league commissioner two years ago.

Barrios, reiterating the PBA's commitment to help in the formations of the national men's basketball team, said his meeting with Sols was "business as usual."

"Basically, I was in charge of intramurals and stuff," Barrios said during press day's PBA Powers at the Shakey's Pizza-SM Megamall. "The important thing is for us to know one another pagud ng [what the rule of] Fiba, ano ang pwedeng [what is it's authority]."

The only setback Barrios foresees once the Fiba decides to lend its players more is the effect on game attendance.

Knicks big man Rose, NBA trophy arriving

NEW YORK KNICKS BIG MAN Malik Rose will lead the cast of luminaries who will grace the grand finale of the Nike Madness slated July 10 to 13 at the Cloisters.

Also set to grace the event are the Sacramento Kings Dalen Tinsley, and Bobby Lewis, the inventor of the Chuckeroo Reboun. To be displayed is the Larry O'Brien championship trophy.

Malik Rose is a 12-year veteran who won two NBA championship titles in his NBA career in a key member of San Antonio Spurs' championship team of 1999 and 2003. He will participate in the Game Court competitions and interact with fans.

He will also conduct the Mini-Malik Basketball Clinic for local kids and share basketball tips and insights on what it takes to be a successful basketball player.

The 2008 NBA Trophy Tour will be one of the most exciting elements of the Grand Finals.

The NBA Madness Philippines is presented by Coca-Cola. Associate Partners are Cobra, DHL and Smart.

The NBA Madness Mall Tour started June 13 and visited five Ayala shopping malls.

PACMAN FANS Manny Pacquiao receives a Team Philippines jacket from NBA star Gilbert Arenas, who was in the country to over the weekend, during a chance encounter in the Ateneo Coliseum. Both watched the Ateneo-La Salle UAAP game. With them are US Ambassador Kristie Kenney (second from right) and Sen. Richard Gordon (right).

SPORTS

French bikers forge Tour de France coup

PELLE

VANTEL, FRANCE—France celebrated a double success on the third stage of the Tour de France, while race favorites Alejandro Valverde and Cadel Evans kept their strength for Tuesday's crucial time trial.

Samuel Dumoulin of France won a closely contested sprint finish, and countryman Romain Feillu grabbed the yellow jersey. French fans fielded cheers when he claimed the yellow jersey by finishing third on Monday.

French stage wins and yellow jerseys have been a rarity in Tours since Bernard Hinault won the last of his five Tours in 1985.

"We proved that we know how to win, we are not worse than the others," Dumoulin said. "French riders deserve a win on the Tour."

Dumoulin and Feillu were part of a four-man breakaway that led for most of the windy, rainy 208-kilometer (129.2-mile) trek from Saint-Malo to Nantes.

Evans, who finished 59th, and Valverde, back in 48th, finished nearly two minutes back, safely among the pack.

Valverde, the race leader since winning Saturday's opening stage, lost the yellow jersey by dropping from first to fourth, but "it doesn't change a lot" for the Caisse d'Epargne team.

Tuesday's 29.5-kilometer (18.3-mile) clock race, beginning and ending in Dinan, will start in reverse order from the overall standings. The veteran Valverde rides fourth from last and gives him the chance to see how first fares.

Valera, sitting one second behind Valverde and ninth in the overall, starts about 15 minutes before Valverde.

"The aim for me now is to make sure I started behind all the favorites," Valverde said. "No time I will have an idea of their times."

Tuesday's fourth stage will give the first real indication as to which riders are looking strong, and could see Evans and Valverde open up significant time gaps on others—at each other.

They had a close tussle in last month's Dauphine Libere race, where Valverde won the time trial and the race—finishing Evans into second place by 29 seconds.

Other Tour contenders like Russia's Denis Menchov, and Spain's Carlos Sastre, also need a strong time trial. Sastre is six seconds behind Evans and seven seconds behind Valverde.

Rosett's overall last year and cited in 2006, Sastre is not particularly fast—so if he loses too much time on Tuesday he may struggle to make that time up later on when the Tour hits the Pyrenees and Alps. AP

FEDERER

NADAL

Roger-Rafa tennis rivalry is as good as it gets

WIMBLEDON, ENGLAND—THEY'LL TALK about the 2008 Wimbledon men's final for years. Or at least until Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal encounters something even more spectacular.

What's, theoretically, could happen in about two encounters at the US Open final.

Roger vs. Rafa just keeps getting better and better—the sort of special rivalry that could lift their sport to heights it hasn't seen in quite some time. Federer is 26, Nadal is 22, and they're seemingly thrown locked into the No. 1 and 2 spots in the rankings, meaning they'll be on opposite halves of tournament draws for the foreseeable future.

Forget about Sung Hill Gates or McEnroe-Lendl or Borlee-Edberg or Sampras-Agassi. None of those duos, or any pair of men in the 40-year Open era, faced off in as many as six Grand Slam finals, as Federer and Nadal already have done.

None of those duos ever produced a 4 hour, 48-minute Wimbledon final, as new champion Nadal and Federer did Sunday, a 6-4, 6-4, 6-7 (5), 5-7, 9-7 classic filled with accuracy (balls) and skills, twists and turns as any match ever played.

"Probably later on in life, you know, I'll go, 'That was a great match,'" Federer said. "But right now, it's not much of a—how do you say?—silver good thing."

So Wimbledon's men's final ever lasted longer ... than super phony, where you remember this tournament has been extended since 1877—and they one finished at nightfall, with camera flashes providing the only traces of light as Nadal carefully lifted the golden trophy overhead.

Nadal has defeated Federer's lead in the world rankings, from 1,215 points ... 6,000 to 5,720—winning the grass-court Grand Slam tournament to 545 points—6,000 to 6,000. And he has finally won a Grand Slam out of clay.

Upstate: Nadal needs a grass to be can get it done at the hard court majors. He made his first semifinal appearance at the Australian Open in January; he's only once made it so far as the quarterfinals at the US Open, which begins Aug. 25.

The men's final in Flushing Meadows is Sept. 7.

"If I were Roger or Rafa [Nadal], it's going to be very good news," Nadal said. "Because we only see more in the finals, no?"

Yes, and it would be good news for viewers, too. AP

Beijing countdown: 1 month to go

BEIJING—WITH ONE MONTH TO go before the Olympics opens on Aug. 8, Beijing was counting the final months on its preparations Tuesday although politicians worries and questions over media freedom remain.

The final episode up appears to have started, with workers spray painting lampposts along main streets and putting up banners.

Final work is also being done on two new subway lines and a railway line, with all expected to open soon, following in the wake of the 21 venues in Beijing, already complete for months. Officials also held opening ceremonies Tuesday for the Main Press Center and International Broadcast Center, which will host reports and images from the games to the world.

But the most difficult promise to keep for the authoritarian government may be allowing reporters—as many as 20,000 are expected—to work freely as they have in other Olympics. This was a pledge China made seven years ago in winning the bid.

Television networks like America's NBC—it has paid billions for Olympic broadcast rights—and the International Olympic Committee have been accused for months with Chinese security officials, fighting to clarify the rights of satellite trucks to cover freely around the city of 17 million.

Access to open like Tiananmen Square—who will be allowed to, when and under what conditions—is also a battleground with Chinese officials fearing the iconic site could be used as a TV backdrop by pro-Tibet protesters or the Falun Gong.

This issue should come to a head again when broadcasters, the IOC and games organizers meet on Wednesday in Beijing. AP

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Gov't lowers growth forecasts for next 2 years

INQUIRER MONITOR

Figures that matter in our nation's life

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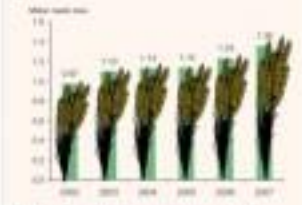

Spillover effects of global slowdown, surging inflation

By Michaelle V. Bonoc

THE GOVERNMENT HAS LOWERED ITS ECONOMIC GROWTH forecasts for 2009 and 2010 to take into account spillover effects of the prevailing sharp rise in food and oil prices.

The new growth forecasts were set at a range of 6.1 to 7 percent for 2009, and 6.4 to 7.2 percent for 2010, according to documents from the inter-agency Development Budget Coordination Committee.

Earlier, the DBCC—made up of officials from the finance and budget departments and the National Economic and Development Authority—was projecting that GDP would grow anywhere between 6.3 and 7 percent in 2009 and 6.8 to 7.6 percent in 2010.

GDP is the total value of goods produced and services rendered within the economy for a given period.

Latest GDP forecasts for 2009 and 2010 were revised following similar reductions in the exports growth projection to 7 percent for 2009 and 9 percent for 2010.

The adjustments in the 2009 and 2010 growth forecasts came after the DBCC downgraded its growth projection for 2008 to 5.7-6.6 percent from 6.3-7 percent.

The 2008 growth projection was cut following the release of reports on inflation and the country's exports by the National Statistics Office.

Year-on-year inflation had been posting record highs since the start of the year, hitting 11.4 percent in June. The M3 (all liquid) inflation rose the fastest in 14 years. Exports growth for January to April settled at only 13.9 percent, keeping the economy officials to meet the original target of 16 percent for the full year.

GDP/T-B3

IN THIS ISSUE

DA bats for added boon of P15B /B3

Feature: Victorias' sugar business turns sweet again /B2

Bangko Sentral seeks ways to unlock 'unofficial' forex stock /B3

PRCI signs share-swap deal with JTH Davies /B6

Costly oil slows down car sales /B7

3 local banks tapped for RTB sale this month /B8

RCBC, 3 others eye acquisition of Asiatrust

By Dara C. Damian

AT LEAST FOUR GROUPS, INCLUDING the Yuchengco Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. and the "thos" Philippine Business Bank, have expressed interest in acquiring a majority stake in publicly listed third bank Asiatrust Development Bank Inc.

Banking sources said there were also two foreign funds—a Zurich-based group and a fund based in Asia...focus on buying Asiatrust. They added that a buyout deal was likely to be signed before the year ends.

Other sources said the Zurich-based fund was being advised by Bank of Commerce president Raul de Mesa, in his personal capacity, but added that Bank of Commerce itself was not vying for Asiatrust.

The majority owners of Asiatrust led by the Garcia family (34 percent) had tapped Intech Financial group (IFG) to assist in the sale of a 51-percent stake to a new investor, banking sources said.

The bank has a free float of 46 percent at the Philippine Stock Exchange and has a number of institutional stockholders such as the Social Security System (10 percent), Asian Development Bank (6 percent) and Government Service Insurance System (3.41 percent).

Asiatrust has P32 billion in resources, of which about half represented its net loan portfolio. As of yesterday's closing price of P8 at the

RCBC/T-B7

CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

P 43.07 = $ 1

As of 5 p.m., July 8, 2008

P 105.03 = $ 1

As of 5 p.m., July 7, 2008

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX

(Secondary market report on Page B6)

Stocks gain 1.5%

SHARES CLOSED 1.5 PERCENT HIGHER yesterday as investors eased, but investors' overall remained cautious, analysts said.

The composite index added 20.89 points to 2,008.55. The all-share index lost 11.34 points to 1,348.81.

There were 85 advancers to 38 decliners, with 47 other issues unchanged.

Turnover rose to P2.01 billion ($50.82 million) from P1.54 billion on Monday.

The key index has risen 0.7 percent over three days but Astro del Castillo of First Grade Holdings told Dow Jones Newswires: "This could just be a dead cat bounce. The light turnover suggests everyone remains cautious."

He sees resistance today would be at 2,008 points and the support level at 2,000 points.

The correction in crude oil futures on Monday and a 2.6-percent gain in Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co.'s American depositary receipts on Wall Street are "two things to cheer about," Del Castillo said.

PLDT rose 2.8 percent to P2,470, while Manila Electric Co. added 6.7 percent to P68 on a technical rebound after talks due to major shareholders' battle for control of the power distributor.

Ayala Land gained 2.2 percent to P8.20. San Miguel "A" finished up 1.3% percent to P45.95 while its "B" shares were unchanged at P40.

AFP

DA bats for added boon of ₱15B

By Amy R. Remo

Speaker proposes additional budget to hasten rural dev't

AGRICULTURE SECRETARY Arthur C. Yap has thrown his support behind a proposal to supplement the agriculture department's budget by ₱15 billion to help farmers and consumers cope with the tight global food supply and high prices of goods.

The supplemental budget was proposed in Congress by Speaker Prospero Nograles Jr., who said the budget would "hasten rural development, guarantee the provision of direct production input subsidies to farmers and fisherfolk, and augment farm rehabilitation funds for post-harvest facilities and social safety nets, especially the most vulnerable."

Yap hopes that Congress will take its cue from the Speaker in allocating a supplemental budget for the DA on top of its regular funding under the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA) so it can carry out a three-point program which, according to Nograles, is "the most practical shield against the global rice-surge prices."

For 2008, the Department of Agriculture has a budget of ₱34.71 billion.

"We welcome the fresh calls in both the Senate and House of Representatives for a higher budgetary outlay for the DA that will help restore the genuine momentum of Philippine agriculture and fisheries," Yap said. "Such a move will enable consumers and farmers alike to ride out the unprecedented global price shocks brought about by tight food supply, filling production, spiralling cost of oil-based fertilizer, and ballooning food demand."

The Speaker's call for higher farm spending followed the proposal of Sen. Edgardo Angara, former agriculture secretary and now chair of the Senate committee on agriculture.

Last month, Angara had called for increased investments in agriculture so that the government could "accelerate capital-intensive programs, such as the repair and rehabilitation of irrigation systems and the establishment of post-harvest facilities.

Angara said that the additional funding would not only guarantee food security but "also provide the government with the most effective weapon against hunger and poverty."

Yap said the DA would need to resolve its ₱42 billion over the next two years to finance the Rice Self-Sufficiency Plan, which would make the country at least 90 percent sufficient in rice by raising total palay yield to 16.56 million metric tons in 2009, and to 19.77 million MT in 2010.

The amount includes allocation for the rehabilitation or repair of irrigation systems and constructing research and development on seed technology, as well as other aspects of palay production.

RP out to corner China tourism market via HK

By Sunnex FM Domingo

THE LOCAL TOURISM SECTOR is expanding its foothold in the Chinese market through Hong Kong...the country's newest largest source of visitors—with the government of mainland's opportunities in adventure travel, medical tourism and retirement.

Tourism Secretary Joe Teodoro said Chinese tourists, particularly those from Hong Kong, were partial to quality-conscious about accessibility, ease of visa application and availability of Chinese food.

Duterte said these were criteria which "the Philippines passes with flying colors."

He said that based on reports from Alejandro Mosico, Philippine consul general to Hong Kong, residents of the special administrative region had options of visiting the Philippines through direct flights to Manila, Cebu or Davao.

"Targeting a Philippine tourist that is print-ready Manila-Ilocos," Duterte said. "And Chinese cuisine has long been part of the Filipino's dining table, brought by centuries of shared history and culture."

The DOT markets the Philippines as the nearest playground for Hong Kong residents, Mosico said. "And we have enjoyed [the market's] strong presence for years of this."

The number of visitors from Hong Kong reached 40,064 from January to April 2008—seven percent better than the traffic reported in the same period last year.

BEDRIDDEN WITH BEDSORES?

FLYPAD

FOR LAST MEDICAL EQUIPMENT

SMOKESTACKS rise from the cane sugar mill of Victorias Milling Corp. at left, while workers tend to the day-to-day grind of refining sugar (right). VMC has become a classic template for creditor-driven corporate rehabilitation in the Philippines.

BACK IN THE BLACK

Victorias' sugar business turns sweet again

By Doris C. Dumlao

(First of three parts)

WHEN THE COUNTRY'S HIGH-FLYING sugar empire Victorias Milling Corp. declined out its debts in July 1997, the banking system had a bitter foretaste of the mess of corporate woes that the Asian currency turmoil would unleash.

But after trimming excess fat, purging internal plunderers and obtaining hefty concessions from creditor-banks—which were prompted to take controlling interests unless no white knights would ever consider coming in—VMC has now been posting profit for three years in a row.

It has thus become a classic template for creditor-driven corporate rehabilitation in the Philippines.

On top of fourth-quarter net income and revenue that VMC had put into place, the milling firm's prospects were also sweetened by the upswing in global commodity markets. While pointing out factors fueling the world's turn to alternative fuels such as ethanol, prices of sugar used as cane material for ethanol, like sugar, have surged. Across VMC's home province of Negros, sugar farmers have started to party as early as about two years ago.

"Under the rehabilitation plan, we'll make money after six years," says Oscar Bunag Jr., Philippine National Bank president and VMC chair. "This is our fifth year and we've been making profits in the last three years."

The largest in the country

VMC is the largest sugar company in the Philippines, accounting for about 14 percent of the country's total output of raw sugar and at least 28 percent of refined sugar. Founded in 1919 by the late Don Miguel Ortega, it started as a sugar mill before it expanded into a sugar refinery, eventually becoming a regular exporter of sugar to the United States.

After an aggressive expansion during its heyday, it is now leaner yet more productive. The 4,300-strong manpower here is the anti-1990s to zero down to about 1,136. But even with a quarter of its original workforce, VMC has doubled its annual production because of the **potential** of its 21,000-hectare milling district.

"When the crisis happened, we were only milling the canes from our district to the tune of 1.5 million tons," says VMC president Abelardo Bagay. "But now that we have this ... financial obligation, we can't survive with that volume of canes to mill. It must be at least almost 3 million tons a year, which we've been meeting now for the last two years."

Tapping the research work of Philippine Sugar Institute, VMC started to use high-yielding sugar varieties, allowing the firm to extract higher sugar content from the canes.

> 'The central bank was watching the developments at VMC closely because ... all the big banks were exposed...'

At present, VMC has a milling capacity of 13,000 **cane tons per day, which is matched** by the capacity of its boiling house that processes the juice into sugar. But there is still a gap with its refinery, which has a daily capacity of 25,000 tons, Bagay says.

Mill share

VMC generates cash flows in mill share in the sale of raw sugar, selling less than refinery operations, and sale of by-products like molasses. The mill share refers to the 36.5-percent cut from the sale of raw sugar produced from canes supplied by the planters to which VMC is entitled. "But mill share serves as the planters' payment for Victorias' milling services. The sugar and molasses would be subsequently sold through monthly auctions in Bacolod City.

The favorable sugar prices enabled the firm to hasten its turnaround.

"But there's one thing you have to realize in the sugar business, particularly with Victorias: it is a good company," Mier quickly adds. "It is fully integrated. So, if you just mind properly, its hauler-pooling, focus on the business, cut down on expenses, you'll make money.

"That's why you see all the Chinese taipans going into the sugar business, [like] John Gokongwei, Andrew Gotianun, Henry Sy. They won't go into that if there's no potential."

VMC competes with about seven other sugar **crusade** in Negros province alone—the Gokongwei/ Sarcheis Negros Development Corp., Jacobsonman-Singer Jose Marie Chan's Bisudagan-Isabela Sugar Co., the Roxas group's Central Azucarera La Carlota, First Farmers Holdings Corp., Bronzeman Philippine Co., Lopez Sugar Corp., and Sagay Central Inc.

VMC's clients have a mixed capacity ranging from 6,000 to 12,000 tons per day.

In the decades past, VMC embarked on non-sugar operations, engaging in engineering products and services, food processing and organic fertilizers. It also acquired a shipping component, and went into management and consultancy services. It also ventured into real estate development and agri-business such as sugarcane, mariculture, cattle and cattle projects. As the organization ballooned into conglomerate, problems incubated.

In the mid-1990s, just as the Asian currency crisis was unfolding, VMC was crippled by a slump in sugar prices and bad management, which led to overdiversification and overborrowing.

All the big banks exposed'

"The central bank was watching [the developments] closely because, if we're not

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DA seeks P834M for rehab of farms, fishing areas

By Amy R. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE yesterday said it would need an additional P834 million to rehabilitate farms and fishing areas damaged by Typhoon "Frank."

This was higher than the original farm relief package proposal of P600 million.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap said the DA needed a bigger budget as the total damage inflicted on the farm and fisheries sectors had already exceeded P3 billion, with 50 farms/fishponds in the Visayas incurring the bulk of the losses.

Yap said the DA had been requesting additional funds for the rehabilitation plan so it could extend financial aid to fisherfolk and fishpond owners; farmers growing palay, corn and high-value commercial crops (HVCC); and the livestock and poultry raisers who were adversely affected by the typhoon.

Yap said the DA had been allocated an initial P600 million to jumpstart the rehabilitation work in the 11 provinces heavily damaged by the typhoon.

"What we have in the P600-million guarantee fund [taken] from the 5 percent of the net income of government-owned and controlled corporations," Yap had said.

This, he said, was a guarantee fund that could be used by thrift banks and cargo banks for distribution to the countryside for farm inputs such as seeds and fertilizers.

"Initially, we've set aside P50 million for emergency seed support for farmers who were badly hit," he added by the typhoon. We're also increasing our support for fertilizers—that's our priority because we need to begin planting as soon as possible," he said.

The agriculture chief said palay farmers have until Sept. 15 to plant.

"We're also realigning some of our funds to provide more fertilizers," he added.

Under the proposed rehabilitation program, the palay and corn subsectors would be given subsidies on certified seeds, inorganic fertilizers and soil ameliorants/biofertilizers.

The fisheries component of the plan would include a dry fingerling dispersal program; distribution of fishing gears; replacement of boats and materials for fish conservation; and the repair of damaged facilities of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources.

For the HVCC subsector, the plan would provide subsidies for seeds, tissue cultured plantlets or other planting materials for vegetable, banana and mango growers in completely damaged areas.

Included also in the recommended implementation of technology transfer programs to encourage the off-season production of these high-value crops.

Subsidies for food assistance to backyard swine raisers, a native chicken dispersal project, animal health programs and laboratory services will also be included in the plan.

Bangko Sentral seeks ways to unlock 'unofficial' forex stock

Peso hits new 10-mo low of 45.87 to $1

By Doris C. Dantao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS IS seeking ways to unlock its foreign exchange stock outside the official reserves without adding too much pressure on the peso, which closed at a new 10-month low of 45.87 to $1 yesterday on lingering concerns over high fuel costs.

The peso lost another 13 centavos yesterday to close near the day's low of 45.86 to a dollar versus Friday's finish of 45.73.

Aside from factors now rising oil prices, currency traders said the central bank was inadvertently exacerbating to the peso's depreciation in recent months by unwinding foreign exchange swaps, which totaled up US dollars cost yet booked in the gross international reserves (GIR).

They, however, said the BSP was trying to address the situation and was now seeking banks' cooperation in removing more dollars from circulating these forex swaps.

The banks that entered into foreign exchange swaps with the BSP had already used the dollar proceeds of the deal to purchase foreign currency assets, including the Philippines government's offshore global bonds or ROPs, currency dealers said.

"But now that the BSP is unwinding the swaps, the banks that have already invested the dollars they got elsewhere are now forced to buy dollars from the spot foreign exchange market to give back to the BSP thus contributing to the peso depreciation," a treasury official said.

The official said some of the banks did not want to unwind their ROPs because they had obtained bond warrants for these securities that would protect them against debt default.

Aside from adding pressure on the peso, banking sources said the swaps were infusing additional liquidity into the financial system at this time that the central bank was waging tough battle against rising inflation.

The BSP aggressively used these swaps as a way of mopping up the excess supply in the system, which was brought about by strong remittances from overseas Filipinos and inflows of foreign portfolio investments in the past.

The forex swaps hold the US dollars bought by the BSP from the open market and swapped for pesos over the last two years to inject the local currency into circulating against the dollar. These are the US dollars that the BSP some now but will be given back to the sellers after a specified period. They are not booked as part of the GIR.

The amount of the BSP's outstanding swaps or the "unofficial" foreign exchange stock is another indication of how much more the BSP would unwind the central bank some to swap such contracts.

Currency traders said the central bank had been unwinding such forex swaps in recent months and finished the US dollars to temper the peso's sharp depreciation.

Senior citizens: The fight goes on

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Manuelito C. Gerastal

AIR FORCE CHIEF LT. GEN. FLORENDO called out the latest batch of Air Force retirees to fight for their rights. No one else, he said, would do it for them.

The good general's call to arms referred to, of course, the retirees' rights under Republic Act No. 9257—Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2003, signed by President Arroyo on Feb. 26, 2004.

Today, four years later, senior citizens all over the archipelago are emotionally battling for their rights under this law.

Almost invariably, the elderly is asked to present a senior citizen's card issued by the city or municipal mayor or the barangay captain. But the law allows the elderly to submit his passport or any "other documents that establish that the senior citizen is a citizen of the Philippines and is at least 60 years of age."

I have always believed that the senior citizen's ID card stopped the holder of his self-respect. The senior citizen looks like begging for a favor. That is why I have never had the ID.

The law provides a wide range of benefits—from tax exemptions and discounts to air fare, to access to education and health programs, to a monthly allowance of P500.

But the most voluminous reimbursement is "the grant of a 20-percent discount from all establishments relative to the utilization of services in hotels and similar lodging establishments, restaurants and recreation centers, and purchase of medicines in all establishments for the exclusive use or enjoyment of senior citizens ..."

Our retail chains like Kentucky Fried Chicken and Mercury Drug have drawn up their own rules that have no basis either in the law or the implementing rules and regulations.

I have not been to KFC and Mercury in ages. I patronize establishments that accept my driver's license.

The association of snowboarding chiefs has also insisted that its members like the Makati Sports Club are not the sort of establishments the law refers to.

It is time some elderlies, maybe a group of Air Force retirees, to bring these arrogant establishments to court.

Hundreds are stiff enough to score my sister-manager Bernice Ui of the law says. "Any person who violates any provision of this Act, shall suffer the following penalties:

"For the first violation, a fine of not less than P50,000 but not exceeding P100,000, and imprisonment of not less than 6 months but not more than 2 years.

"For any subsequent violation, a fine of not less than P100,000, but not exceeding P200,000, and an imprisonment for not less than 2 years but not more than 6 years.

"If the offender is a corporation, organization or similar entity, the penalty shall be imposed on the president, manager, chief executive officer, partner or any responsible officer who shall be liable thereby. If the offender is an alien or a foreigner, he shall be deported immediately after service of sentence without further deportation proceedings.

"Upon filing of the appropriate complaints, and after due notice and hearing, the proper authorities may also cause the revocation or cancellation of the business permit, permit to operate, franchise and other similar privileges granted to any business entity that fails to abide by the provisions of this Act."

If anybody is willing to sue, I can recommend a very good lawyer.

Yehey! sees double-digit growth

YEHEY! COME SOLDERED ITS TURNaround story as it posted a net profit for the first time after the burst of the dot-com bubble in 2000.

"Expect Yehey! to achieve superordinate growth this year, and I'm talking about double-digit growth," Donald Steinch Lim, Yehey! president and CEO, said at the company's recent annual stockholders meeting.

A 64-percent growth in advertising revenue and interest income from treasury investments enabled Yehey! to turn years of losses and post a net profit of P6.6 million in 2007.

Total revenue rose by 66 percent to P26.7 million mainly due to an increase in website development and maintenance for online campaigns. Total assets jumped 630 percent to P27.8 million in 2007 from the previous year. Yehey! was also able to reduce its liabilities by 84 percent to P12.8 million in 2007 with the payment of all advances from parent company Interage Corp.

Lim attributed Yehey!'s financial turnaround to its steady growth as an online marketing solutions provider.

"Yehey! is no longer just a portal. More and more companies come to us for marketing campaigns that go beyond the mainstream," he added.

Yehey!'s real strength also lies in penetrating new markets for its client companies and reaching up online media events.

With an eye toward hitting a double-digit profit growth this year, Lim announced Yehey!'s plans to go into overdrive with a rebrand its arsenal of Web buzzes. "That gives us a consistent revenue stream." The company is currently handling 300 Web marketing projects for various big-name brands. It has also recently formed Media Corners, a joint venture with Havas Group of Europe, one of the world's biggest media traders. It is also in the thick of negotiations to set up Telebrands Global, a business process outsourcing firm that offers Yehey!'s Web development, creative services, and online payment solutions.

Victorias' sugar business ...

From page B2

able to rehabilitate VMC), it would affect the banking industry," Miet recounts, referring to the P989 just in the scheme of things. "All the big banks and large banks were exposed."

SMC, erstwhile a prime creditor, saw its debts balloon from P1.2 billion, when it first defaulted, to nearly P6 billion due to delays in the implementation of the rehabilitation plan, which was amended in late 2000 after a battle amongst all the creditors.

Among VMC's biggest creditors were PNB, Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co., Land Bank of the Philippines, Asia West Bank and Equitable PCI Bank.

To give VMC breathing room, the creditors finally agreed to convert P1.2 billion worth of accrued interest into equity, accepting P2.4 billion worth of convertible notes for the principal loan, and restructured the rest for 15 years at below-market interest rates—10 percent for the peso-denominated loans and 6 percent for the US dollar-denominated loans.

The debt restructuring deal started in 2001 and included a three-year grace period.

To recapitalize the ailing VMC in 2000, the creditors formed a management committee and hired investment banker Arthur Aguilar, former chief of the state investment arm National Development Co.

In a nutshell, Aguilar says VMC's turnaround could be attributed to outright management and, more recently, good corporate governance. After all, VMC was not just a casualty of falling sugar prices but of bad management.

"It overdiversified using debt rather than equity, and it was also plundered by a group in the old management," Aguilar says.

At least seven former officials who joined VMC into their personal cash trusts are now facing charges of fraud and estafa in court, Aguilar says. "As it was physically difficult to steal sugar stocks, VMC was mostly plundered via the double sale of sugar quotas or warehouse receipts." (To be continued)

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PRCI signs share-swap deal with JTH Davies

By Elizabeth Sarafica-Larson

PHILIPPINE RACING CLUB INC. (PRCI) has sealed an agreement with holding firm JTH Davies to transfer its 22-hectare racetrack in Makati City in exchange for shares in JTH Davies.

Both companies yesterday jointly disclosed in the stock exchange that they have signed a deed of transfer with subscription agreement approving the property-for-share swap. PRCI will get 795.82 million shares of 95 percent of JTH Davies.

The highly contested share swap deal was ratified last June 18.

The deal will also pave the way for the redevelopment of the racetrack property located at the Sta. Ana Park in Makati City into a commercial office and residential area. PRCI president Solomon Cua had said.

This was despite a temporary restraining order obtained by minority shareholders from the Makati Regional Trial Court that enjoined certain directors of the company from processing and tackling certain portions of the agenda at the PRCI annual meeting of shareholders, particularly the swap proposal.

Cua said the majority shareholders agreed with the legal opinion of a lawyer-stockholder, Benjamin Santos, that the TRO from the Makati court was "defective" since the case filed was filed without venue was entered by a stockholder filed with the Supreme Court.

The minority shareholders said Santos represented the interests of the majority shareholders.

Last April 30, a majority of PRCI directors obtained a TRO from the Supreme Court that stopped the Court of Appeals, Makati Trial Court Judge Court Umotina and shareholders Miguel Ocampo Tan, Jessie Yao and Brigido Dulay from enforcing decisions made by the Court of Appeals and the Makati RTC.

In its information statement, PRCI said that with the Supreme Court TRO lifting the majority shareholders, it could now proceed with the proposed share swap under JTH Davies.

In May 2007, PRCI's executive committee approved the swapping of the company's 22 hectare racetrack with 795.82 million shares of JTH Davies.

Minority shareholders had tentatively the move by the PRCI board led by its honorary chair, Santiago Cua, to disregard the TRO issued by the Makati court.

"We are now set to take the next legal step. We also reserve the right to file the appropriate legal action against the Cua faction for the actions they took [Wednesday]," the minority shareholders representing 24 percent of the company said in a statement.

21-ha Sta. Ana racetrack redevelopment

Jollibee boss joins PLDT board

By Riza T. Olchondra

TONY TAN CAKTIONG OF JOLLIBEE FAME joined the board of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) as a director on Tuesday.

Tan Caktiong is chair, president and CEO of Jollibee Foods Corp. He is also a recipient of Ernst and Young's World Entrepreneur of the Year 2004 award.

He replaced Ms. Lourdes Rasma Clave, whose resignation was earlier accepted by the PLDT board.

PLDT said in a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange that her resignation "is not expected to have any significant impact on the company's current or future operations, financial position or results of operations."

Besides announcing the change in officers, the PLDT board also declared cash dividends out of the company's unrestricted retained earnings as of Dec. 31, 2007.

About P13.42 million will be paid out to all outstanding shares of the company's Series IV cumulative, noncouvertible, redeemable preferred stocks for the quarter ending Sept. 15. The dividend is payable on Sept. 15 to holders on record as of Aug. 7.

The company will also pay out PI billion to holders of Series A, 1, 6, 9, 9A and 10-A cumulative, convertible preferred stocks. Holders on record as of Aug. 1 will be paid on Aug. 29.

Otto expects exploration partners by 4th quarter

By Abigail L. Ho

AUSTRALIAN FIRM OTTO ENergy Ltd. expects to have new joint-venture partners for its three service contracts in the Philippines in preparation for the start of drilling activities early next year.

Otto chief executive Alex Parks told the Australian Stock Exchange that indicative bids from prospective partners should come in by September.

The company would then enter farm-in agreements within the fourth quarter, he said.

"We are already receiving interest from a number of companies, ranging from mid-tiers to the majors, who are keen to explore for oil and gas in the Philippines, which has tremendous hydrocarbon potential, but still remains relatively unexplored," he said in a disclosure.

"By farming down, to retain a working interest of between 25 percent and 50 percent in each service contract, Otto can participate in a greater number of wells and thereby increase our chance of success," he added.

Otto is planning to drill up to 10 high-impact exploration wells in its offshore Palawan and Sulu Visayan Basin contract areas over the next four to six years.

The company recently conducted a geotechnical survey in southern Service Contract 51 in the East Visayan Basin to map out areas of oil seepages in the area in preparation for drilling.

A geotechnical survey results search for near hydrocarbons on the topsoil in the contract area.

"Through acquisition of good-era seismic data and good technical work, Otto has significantly de-risked these highly prospective targets and brought a number of them to ready to drill status," Parks said.

To fund the company's planned drilling activities, he said Otto would be looking at candidates from the Cuba oil field, in which it has an 18.28-percent stake, as well as equity from its future farm-in partners.

Otto is expected to generate net revenue of around $12 million a month from the Cuba oil production.

Costly oil slows down car sales

Local assemblers report changing behavior of buyers

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE GROWTH OF DOMESTIC VEHICLE sales showed decline to 17.6 percent in the first half due to the changing behavior of buyers amid the unabated increase in fuel prices, according to local assemblers.

The growth in the same period last year was better at 17.4 percent, contributing to the 230,677 units increase of 28.3 percent on the back of strong consumer demand and low interest on car loans.

The Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers Association of the Philippines and the Truck Manufacturers Association said in a joint report that their members' combined sales reached 61,861 units as of mid-June compared to 44,257 in the same period in 2007.

Data from Toyota and TMA show that turnover of commercial vehicles (CV) in the first six months grew 15.1 percent to the while that of passenger cars grew 18.9 percent.

Corapi president Elizabeth H. Lee said the growth as of mid-June remained relatively strong and stable although sales in June dipped by 1.2 percent to 10,772 units.

"[But] this is a slight decline compared to double-digit sales decline seen in other countries," Lee said.

"While the continued increase in gas prices had an effect, other factors including the effects of Typhoon 'Frank' weighed in as well," she added. "The typhoon short-term selling days and disrupted business operations at most provincial dealerships."

Lee added that with the rise in fuel costs, consumer believe has shifted to recognize the importance of fuel efficiency of the vehicles they buy.

"Buyers are changing the way they are vehicles with utility—dual purpose vehicles for personal and business use—as well as conservation as a shift in mindset," Lee said.

However, "because for the whole year remains positive."

The CV segment, which includes the subcategories of 4x4s, utility vehicles, light commercial vehicles, light trucks and trucks and buses, continues to account for bulk of sales at 56 percent of the total.

These subcategories showed improvement in sales of 4x4's went up 8.9 percent to 18,463 units; light CVs—consisting of pickups, vans, compact sports utility vehicles,... 20.6 percent to 22,336; and trucks and buses, 9 percent to 681.

In the six-month period, sales of light trucks declined by 7.8 percent to 912 units while turnover of passengers cars increased to 21,865 units from 15,944.

The increase in AUV sales in June alone was attributed mainly to the fleet deliveries that some manufacturers made last month.

Also in June, LCP sales declined by 8.8 percent compared to May numbers, with compact wagons and full-size sports utility vehicles exhibiting the decline.

Lee said that a slowdown in business activities and the high fuel prices contributed to the low sales performance of light trucks while buyers deferred purchases of trucks and buses in June.

Toyota Motor Philippines Corp. remained at the lead with 36 percent of the overall market, selling 22,209 units in the first half.

Second was Mitsubishi Motors Philippines Corp. with 13.6 percent of the market or 8,365 units.

Third was Honda Cars Philippines Inc. with 12.5 percent of the market or 7,676 units.

Security Bank strives to keep treasury lead

By Doris C. Dumlao

SECURITY Bank Corp. is beefing up its trading solutions platforms to keep its lead in the country's treasury market.

The bank said the other day that it had signed a contract with Fresh-based IT solutions provider CGX Financial Solutions Ltd. to expand its derivatives trading capability and replace its entire treasury system to meet fast-changing requirements.

Rafael Algarra, senior vice president and treasurer of Security Bank, said: "To sustain our trading position in the treasury market, we are driven to be ahead on product innovations and we continuously strive to provide our clients improved services. As examples, we completed outstanding local solutions when we were looking at expanding our derivatives investment."

Specialist treasury systems provider CGX will provide Security Bank with its third generation of Centre Suite treasury solutions covering dealing, risk management, operations, accounting and reporting requirements of a treasury within a single system.

"There was diverse interest [provided] as a platform for improved efficiency," Algarra said.

The adoption of Centre Suite intended to boost Security Bank's ability to service its customers, as well as streamline its internal processes through automation.

Joseph Wong, managing director of CGX, said: "Treasury is an area which is subject to accelerating pace of change. Our's unique feature of allowing specialization to the front, while automatically maintaining an easy upgrade path with regular new releases to the software. Release on roll the front."

One of the most profitable domestic banks, Security Bank is recognized for its expertise in the treasury business.

₱500 lifeline subsidy reaches provinces

By Abigail L. Ho

THE GOVERNMENT'S P500 ONE-TIME cash subsidy for lifeline power users, or those using at most 100 kilowatt-hours a month, has reached the provinces with the National Electrification Administration's release of more than P420 million to 20 electric cooperatives nationwide.

The disbursement, part of the "Extra ng Pilipinong Kuryente" program of the government, would be enough to cover 981,429 lifeline customers in seven regions.

The NEA on June 12 signed an agreement with the Department of Social Welfare and Development for the implementation of the "Financial Karyente" program, which aimed to help alleviate the burden of the poor, amid the rising prices of fuel, electricity, rice and other basic commodities.

Under the agreement, the DSWD would transfer to the NEA the amount that would then be released to the covered electric cooperatives for distribution to qualified recipients.

NEA initially released P213.4 million to nine electric cooperatives - La Union Electric Cooperative Inc., Central Pangasinan Electric Cooperative Inc., First Laguna Electric Cooperative Inc., Metro Ilocos Electric Cooperative Inc., Cagayan Electric Cooperative Inc., Iloilo I, II and III Electric Cooperative Inc. and Cebu II Electric Cooperative Inc.

Another P172.3 million was later given for distribution to 17 more power distributors, namely Zambales I Electric Cooperative Inc., Pampanga I Electric Cooperative Inc., Mindoro Oriental Electric Cooperative Inc., Tarlac Island Electric Cooperative Inc., Quezon II Electric Cooperative Inc., Romblon Electric Cooperative, Antique Electric Cooperative Inc., Bukidnon Electric Cooperative Inc., Bilaran Electric Cooperative Inc., Samar II Electric Cooperative Inc., Northern Samar Electric Cooperative Inc., Eastern Samar Electric Cooperative Inc., Leyte II, III, IV and V Electric Cooperatives Inc. and Southern Leyte Electric Cooperative Inc.

Apart from the one-time P500 subsidy for lifeline power users, Consumer and Oil Price Watch chair Raul Concepcion also suggested that the government use its real-estate tax windfall to provide more subsidies to poor consumers.

Subsidies could be given to help defray costs associated with the use of electricity and liquefied petroleum gas and with the purchase of basic goods, he said.

Another form of help for the poor would be the removal of the VAT from the electricity bills of consumers within the lifeline category, he said. Households within the lifeline bracket should also be exempted from the 12-percent VAT imposed on liquefied petroleum gas.

"The cost of the subsidy is P1.25 billion annually and can be sourced from the oversized tax from bridenpayers," he said.

RCBC ...

From page B1

stock exchange, the development bank had a market capitalization of P864 million.

"Consolidation is good for the banking industry, especially for niche players like Intercon," said stockbroker Joseph Sisaw of Eagle Equities Inc.

Any new investor who takes over a majority stake in Intercon will have to make an offer to buy out other minority shareholders at the same price per share, in line with the tender offer rules of the PSE and the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Intercon was incorporated in 1960 as a private development bank under the auspices of Quezon City Development Bank. Through the support of the state-owned Development Bank of the Philippines, it changed its corporate name to 1982 and debuted on the local bourse in 1986.

The bank, which is focused on lending to small and medium enterprises, has 28 branches throughout metro cities and neighboring provinces of Cavite, Bulacan, Laguna and Isabela.

PNB and PCIBC have long been awaiting for banks to acquire.

Gov't lowers growth ...

From page B1

Economic lower income from exports and residential increases in prices of consumption tend to curb economic growth, the DBCC agreed to lower the 2008 GDP growth forecast, which consequently led to its decision to trim its outlook for 2009 and 2010 as well.

The block earlier said the sharp rise in consumer prices had the tendency of lowering household spending, which in turn adversely affects the profitability of businesses. Firms will then defer expansion and investment plans, curbing growth in employment opportunities.

Unemployment growth in income of households and businesses and lead to a slowdown in the growth of the overall economy.

The block said the sustained increase in oil prices was brought by tight supply and continually growing demand for the commodity. The growing population and booming economies of China and India were said to be contributing largely to increasing global demand for oil.

Prices of rice in the world market are also rising because oil is a major input for the production of fertilizers and pesticides. The world's growing population is also increasing the demand for the staple.

The Philippines, although said to be rich in natural resources, is heavily dependent on imported oil.

BUSINESS

3 local banks tapped for RTB sale this month

Retail T-bond issue size will depend on demand, says Tan

By Michelle V. Baron

THE GOVERNMENT HAS TAPPED THREE local investment banks to serve as joint managers and coordinators in the the scheduled sale of retail treasury bonds later this month.

These are SB Capital Corp., Development Bank of the Philippines and First Metro Investment Corp.

To be sold, according to National Treasurer Maria Cristina Tan, are three- and five-year treasury bonds.

Tan said the government did not set any target amount to be raised from the bond sale, adding that the issue size would depend on market demand.

"We [Bureau of the Treasury] are flexible on the amount. The objective of the sale of the RTBs is primarily to provide investment opportunities to small savers, especially those who have excess money from previously issued RTBs that have already matured," he said.

Also, Tan said the yields of the RTBs would be based on secondary market interest rates on three- and five-year bonds.

He said there were considerable requests for the government to issue RTBs. Market players said the RTBs would be attractive for investors because of the relatively high interest rates this year than last year.

Unlike regular government securities, RTBs require only a minimum investment of P5,000 minimum making it affordable for small investors.

In July last year, the last time RTBs were sold, the government raised P77.6 billion from the bond sale. The three-year RTBs sold last year carried an interest rate of 6.875 percent, while the five-year bench had a yield 7.125 percent.

The money to be raised from the sale of RTBs this month will help the government fund its growing expenditure requirement this year. Government spending for this year was originally set at P1.326 trillion. This was, however, increased by P66.3 billion to be able to fund more social services programs for the poor.

MOTORING

Editor Cesar D. Manganaan

New models roll out despite soaring pump prices

QUIRKS for the Nissan Navara—its specs and other issues—can be answered at your nearest dealership, or log on to www.carpricecars.com.ph. Navara units are CBUs from Thailand, not from Europe.

By Tessa R. Salazar

PUMP PRICES OF gasoline has already breached the P60-per-liter mark. And now we're starting to hear doomsday scenarios of triple-digit prices for a single liter of gasoline since world crude oil costs $200 per barrel. (Current-ly they're hovering at $140 per barrel).

Car manufacturers, obviously the automotive sector most likely to get affected by such news, are putting up a brave front. "Never say die," they say. A majority of them are enacting pump price to a challenge rather than a problem. Industry sales, furthermore, suggest nothing to be panicky about, as they show an increase of 34 percent year on year (Jan-May).

CURIOUS? Lots can ring CARS at 813-2222 or 723-0088. And then maybe you can paw over the Dodge Nitro and take it for a spin.

Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the Philippines Inc. (Campi) President Elizabeth Lee said the automotive industry so far has shown resiliency but "we don't operate in a vacuum," she was quick to add.

"The world oil price hike has had early significant effects on the larger economies like those of the United States and Europe. It will also have an effect on the Philippines. However, that effect is not that pronounced yet as players have executed promotions that help sustain sales," Lee explained.

She also singled out the "entrepreneurial" trend Filipinos involved in small businesses and those get an ROI, or return on investment, in short vehicle purchases and preference of dual-utility vehicles (pickup, vans and AUVs) as helping prop up vehicle sales as well.

She cited the increase in cost of raw materials worldwide as the biggest challenge for automakers.

Preferential shift

Jimmy Ide, Toyota Motors Philippines first vice president, sees a preference shift, as the market hankers more and goes for low grade diesel SUVs and small hatch passenger cars. He added that more material cost will definitely catch up.

Mel Jimeo, Ganapi vice president who is also Mitsubishi Motors Philippines (MMP) stressed that it is important to recognize fuel prices as a global crisis that "demands changes in our way of life and that leadership has to manage the change smoothly and avoid chaos."

Jimeo said "so far, sales are holding due to upgrade to more fuel-efficient vehicles and OEW purchases."

And so, life must go on, wheels must, as Limp Bizkit would rap, "keep rollin', rollin', rollin'," and the launch parties just keep "getting started," as INK would boil it out.

Life to the party

Speaking of parties, Chrysler's newest SUV release, the 2008 Dodge Nitro SXT, is said to give life to a drill party of "island, mainstream designs" (according to Chrysler) of Japanese SUVs.

Cole Motors Philippines, exclusive distributor of the mid-sized Nitrogen, Dodge Calibre,

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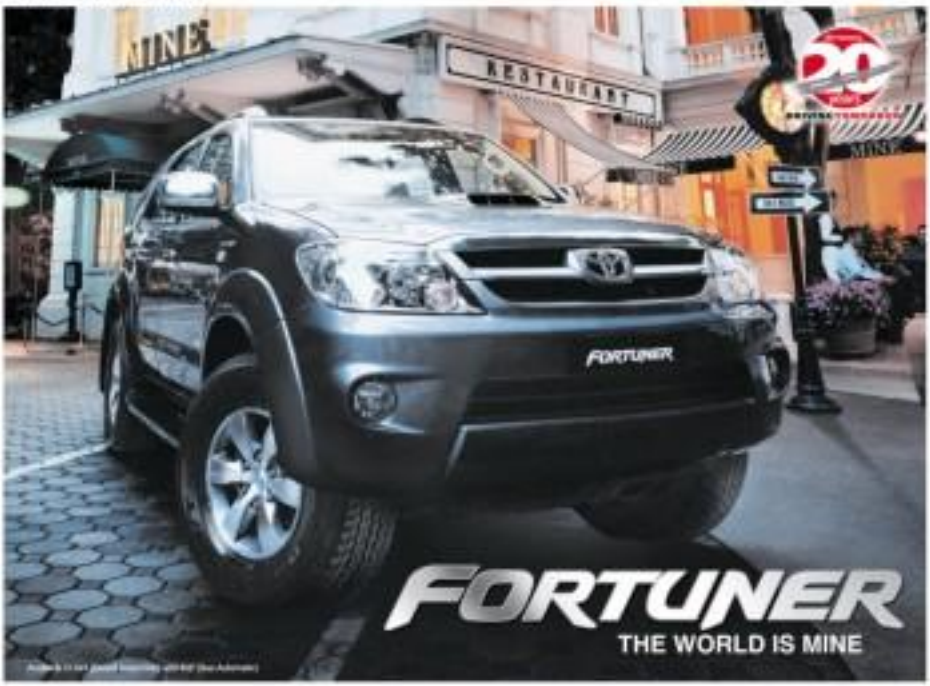

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Life at sixty

IT STUNS YOU DOWN EVERY time your drive past a gas station. There is really no escaping its everyday consequences. Because of it, some people commute to work only twice a week, while others cleaned the Wall per liter price. Diesel, while still marginally cheaper, is well north of P50 as well. So much so it would be nice to be oblivious to the reality of fuel prices, sticking your head into a hole in the ground and pretending to ignore the all-time high prices of fuel is simply impossible.

The steady onslaught of higher fuel prices isn't about to stop soon. The P70 price point looms menacingly over the horizon. The approach of winter together with the traditional increase in prices due to a higher demand for indoor heating in the temperate developed world is just around the corner.

China alone needs to keep near its 4 billion people nearer the coming winter. Combine that with the fact that we live in a world that is practically at war. It seems that if any of the oil-producing countries even sneezes out of turn then P60 per liter seems a distinct possibility. Pity it is.

Fuel price crunch

At least the fuel price crunch seems egalitarian in nature. Even those who could afford to purchase and fuel large, gas-guzzling vehicles are being forced to simply ditch them. The market is filled with secondhand gasoline glutton being sold to a buyer's market. If you've ever wanted a V8-powered SUV, now seems like the time to travel for really sweet deals. Why anyone would want a vehicle that does 4 km/liter at best is another matter altogether.

The irony is the same all over the world. Already manufacturers have decided that the jaw-powered SUV and truck markets have seen better days – to be polite. Production has been scaled back industry wide, an act that comes with a painful fiscal price.

Yielding productive means designing plants. Fewer plants means less workers employed. Mass layoffs mean billion-dollar payouts in severance and pension benefits.

This may sound like a bold statement, but the SUV is going the way of the dinosaur, complete with its own vanishing planetary disaster. The world price of oil seems to have rid all some of the biggest, most voracious vehicles ever to have roamed the earth. In fairness, a rock falling from space might have been easier to deal with. The fuel carrots is that other less than efficient types of car are seen. Many other vehicles are in the market today may suffer the same fate. What good is an enormous sedan when the sun that drives it to work eats no longer pay for the gasoline to run it?

Fuel frugal cars

Just as with any mass extinction, a few species often remain out of the rubble to rule the roost. Fuel frugal cars now command the attention of the motoring world. Not just as mid-any evolutionary process, step-up motorcars only serve to starve off the eventuality of extermination, or obsolescence in this case.

Hypercheap fuel fuel engines and the electric hybrids sadly fall into that precarious "here today, gone in the long run" category. However efficient and green those cars are, their fate is inexorably linked to the future of petroleum. And yes, the stuff will one can eventually as at the very least some to a point that fossil fuels will be priced beyond the reach of most of us.

Where to now then? In which direction will the automobile have to head toward to ensure viability and success into the next millennium? The evolutionary opposable thumb that will guarantee the continued existence of the automobile is now evident in the periphery of the species. Think of them as research and development mutants that will one day eventually become the most common type of car.

Survival of the car line is reasonable sources of energy, some sort of fuel that is inexhaustible in nature. It could come from electricity drawn from the sun and ebb of wind and waves. Maybe the hydrogen fuel cell that chemically creates power with the addition of oxygen will be the answer? Or simple electrolysis that turns water into an abundant source for combustible oxygen. Where we get there, the price of gasoline and diesel will no longer matter. What a wonderful day that will be.

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WEARING HELMETS

A safety reminder for motorcyclists

THE SOARING PRICE OF OIL MOBILE, while is one reality we all have to accept, and as we all continue to face the many challenges in the months to come, it does underscore why one key factor in the transport system. Commuting is now considered a way of life and the classic bar is many cost-effective mode of commuting for the people is the motorcycle. To date, the number of motorcycle commuters continues to rise all over the country.

Driving a motorcycle involves skill, presence of mind, and safety. And one very important rule is to "always wear a helmet" Just like "wearing a seatbelt" is synonymous in driving to the 140 more of all shapes, sizes and brands are now available in the market. Statistics reveal that an increase in the number of road accidents usually involves motorcycles.

SPYDER Eyeless model

Helpful tips

Before you take the road with your new motorcycle, here are some helpful tips to remember about helmets as shared by Spyder.

• **Safety standards.** Always make sure to check that your helmet has passed at least one of the safety standards from the following: DOT (USA standard), European standard (or ECE)...accepted by more than 50 countries and the Snell (JP), BSI (UK), and Israel (the most highly regarded standard used in the United States).

• **Helmet components.** A motorcycle helmet has two major parts: the outer shell and the energy-absorbing inner liner.

Outer shells for good quality helmets come in either a multi-fiber composite like fiberglass (example, Spyder's Crimson and Positive helmet models), molded thermoplastic such as ABS (ex. Spyder's Eyeless, Eclipse and Enclose models) as well as other less commonly used materials such as carbon fiber and kevlar. New generation materials that offer the same strength as conventional helmet materials but are mostly half its weight, such as carbon fiber and kevlar may be considerably lighter on the head, but will surely be heavier on the pocket.

The shell protects against penetration, against abrasions when you slide, and absorbs energy as it flexes on impact. The outer shell of the helmet plays a big role in the overall comfort of the helmet. Cheap helmets sometimes use recycled plastic resin which brings down the cost of the helmet but cannot compare with the safety standards an ABS or fiberglass helmet gives the user. Spyder helmets give its consumers value for money as it offers great quality at reasonable prices.

Ventilation systems also provide the rider with more comfort. Helmets with more than three air intake vents in the front and center vents at the back that actually work and are not merely decorations. They should also have sliding covers to keep rain water from entering in.

Aside from these core major parts, the visor or face shield also plays a big role in helmet safety. The visor should be able to prevent more than 90% of harmful UV rays. The visor should be able to prevent more than 90% of harmful UV rays. The visor should be able to prevent more than 90% of harmful UV rays

Fuel price getting so expensive?

Look at the bright side

BLA

By Charles E. Bulan

GOOD NEWS COULD STILL arise from a seemingly tragic situation.

A P300 per liter gasoline, other types of petroleum-based fuel could also hover within that price range—is no longer a far-fetched possibility and like plagues that does not discriminate by economic class, race or age, such high fuel price will definitely inflict pain to millions of drivers and commuters throughout the country.

But let us not forget that there is also the other side of the coin, so to speak.

Such eventuality will not bring the end of transportation as we know it here in the Philippines or will make Filipinos give up their dream of owning a car.

Instead, the rising prices of fuel along with an increasing perception that future fuel prices will be at least as high will bring a paradigm shift, according to Toyota Motor Philippines, which dominates the country's automotive market.

More inquisitive

"Filipinos will still drive their cars; car manufacturers will still continue to build vehicles. However, this time, Filipino car buyers will be more inquisitive when choosing their next vehicle, considering they will now compare the pros and cons of owning such a vehicle, even comparing its long-term cost of ownership. Since the public will be paying more attention to the issue, car manufacturers—including Toyota—will be more committed to research to make its products even more fuel efficient than they already are," said TMP Vice Chairman/President for Sales and Marketing Danny Isla.

He also added that even this early, there is now a noticeable shift in demand for lower displacement engines and for diesel-powered vehicles.

But aside from the shift in the buying behavior, there is also another excellent development happening.

Motivated

"With fuel at previous unimaginable price car owners and drivers nowadays are compelled to adopt fuel economy-maximizing behaviors," he reported.

In fact, Isla informed that Toyota will soon embark on a fuel economy campaign to educate the public about some simple things that would provide better fuel efficiency. For example, if more drivers will only follow two of the most important reasons that affect a vehicle's fuel consumption—driving within the speed limit (80 to 100 kph) and maintaining themselves to suddenly accelerate—they will not only save fuel but also prevent traffic-related accidents," he said.

Adopt sustainable forms

Moreover, the rise in fuel prices will also bring the country closer to adopting more sustainable forms of transport (those which minimize emissions of carbon dioxide and pollutants).

But don't expect hydrogen- or solar-powered cars to suddenly pop out of our roads. Even the decision to bring the Prius here will not be easy.

In fact now, if TMP makes the Prius available to the market, it would cost around P1.7 million, a price that would not be too attractive to its intended market. In our opinion, should the government give it to TMP, could lower the Prius' price tag to P1.3 million).

"The phenomenal success of the Prius worldwide and the continued increase in prices of fuel have inspired TMP to do whatever it could to introduce it locally. But first, we need to make sure that all these major factors are considered: make it more affordable through exemptions in duties and taxes; enhance dealer service facilities and their hybrid technology know-how; and most importantly, ensure that the Prius itself is available to operate given our country's environmental and road conditions," Isla explained.

But don't lose hope.

Short-term response

TMP has a short-term response that, as Isla assured, is already important in helping Filipinos cope with the rising fuel prices.

"Toyota's fuel-efficient technologies—the VVTi engines (for gasoline-operated models) and D4D engines (for the diesel-operated models) for instance—is already helpful in enabling Filipino motorists to take their vehicles to the road without them worrying too much about their fuel budget (the Vios, was awarded by the Department of Energy as the most fuel-efficient vehicle in 2006).

Indeed, while high fuel prices will bring countless miseries, it will also cause Filipinos to consider things they used to take for granted.

Neighbors could share commutes and forge new friendships. Others might consider walking or riding their bikes if they only need to travel a short distance and in the process, become more healthy physically. Car buyers who now give more weight on their new car's fuel-consumption ratings will not only help in contributing to a healthier air but also enable them to influence government and industry leaders to rethink the issues quickly (here are more other positive things that should come out of this fuel price issue and Filipinos will surely be able to adapt," Isla said.

The 'green' Accord

CAN POWERFUL DOUBLE BE GREEN?

With about 700 million cars currently on the world's roads producing 2.8 billion tons of carbon dioxide (CO_2) annually, the car manufacturing sector seems not to have a choice but to think and act green.

Honda is in the forefront of this campaign by coming up with engines and models that respond to the need of the savings.

Latest green machine

Its latest "green" machine is the late-2008 Honda Accord which is equipped with a new engine that's powerful and fuel-efficient at the same time.

"Honda succeeds in achieving cleaner exhaust emissions to reduce air pollution and CO_2 emissions via improved fuel efficiency," says Hiroshi Shimizu, Honda Cars Phils. Inc. president and general manager.

With a newly developed 3.5-liter SOHC VTEC engine with 24 valves, a single

ACCORD

overhead cam (SOHC) for each cylinder bank (capable of 271 hp at 6,200 rpm), and a new-generation technology known as Variable Cylinder Management (VCM), the 2008 Honda Accord presents a performance that is beyond power, without taking its toll on the environment.

Synonymous with harmony

"Accord is synonymous with harmony, and this is what the vehicle aims to achieve with the environment. Beneath the quiet luxury and cutting-edge design is the earth-friendly core of the Accord: a low-emission i-VTEC engine working in partnership with VCM," Shimizu adds.

The 2008 Accord's powerful V6 engine runs clean, meeting Euro-4 emission standards, while VCM is an intelligent computerized system that maximizes power and optimizes fuel economy simultaneously, activating the engine's cylinders in response to the driver's needs. The system enables the engine to switch between six-, four- and three-cylinder operation depending on the engine load, cutting down cylinders when they are not needed. It effectively eliminates unnecessary harmful emissions and improves the overall fuel economy while maintaining the high power output.

Full power

At 3-cylinder mode, the 2008 Honda Accord makes use of the V6 engine's full power, powering the economy engine for high-speed driving, accelerating along major highways, and uphill climbing. Negotiating Metro Highway on the road to Baguio, for instance, becomes a breeze.

For moderate speed and climbing moderately inclined roads such as the streets of Tagaytay or Antipolo, the 4-cylinder mode kicks in, balancing both power and fuel efficiency.

When city-driving at 37 kph or stop-and-go traffic, the Accord switches to 3-cylinder mode, maximizing fuel efficiency while easy driving.

INSIDE, an informative cockpit, CD/MP3 player, audio controls on steering wheel

THE 1.5-LITER, 16-valve, DOHC engine of the Suzuki SX4

GENEROUS cargo space in this subcompact sedan

Suzuki's newest subcompact

AMID FRESH MOTORCYCLES, Suzuki has caused some civil ire producing small, front-wheel-drive cars and its latest addition, the SX4 sedan, catches on the sporty tradition.

The SX4 subcompact sedan, which was introduced in other countries in 2007 for the 2008 model year, was preceded in 2006 by the SX4 all-wheel-drive (AWD) hatchback. When Suzuki Philippines Inc. launched the SX4 front-wheel-drive (FWD) sedan here last May 30, they chose to equip it with a 1.6-liter 16-valve twin-cam engine instead of the 1.5-liter engine that is the standard SX4 powerplant in the United States and other markets.

Competitive

By doing so, Suzuki Philippines was able to price the SX4 sedan competitively and thus position it to grab market share from major rivals like the Honda Jazz. But in the process the SX4 sedan lost its best-selling point: the 145-hp 2.0-liter engine propelling a subcompact weighing only 1,300 kg. Furthermore, at P924,000, the SX4 sedan is still pricier than its competitors—the Jazz, Toyota Vios, Toyota Yaris and even its own sedan mate, the Suzuki Swift.

On the other hand, in the context of skyrocketing oil prices, frantic Philippines may have been wise in favor the fuel economy of a 1.6-engine over the power of a 2.0-liter that is the SX4 hatchback had already been noted for its thirst. And theoretically, packing 100 more horses than the 1.5-liter engines of the competition in the subcompact segment should make a difference in acceleration and justify the higher price tag.

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla Mendoza

Fair

During the three days I was given the SX4 sedan, however, I found its engine performance fair in middling, if not underpowered, in 60 km per hour and slower, the 103-hp engine drones harshly while wind and road noises intrude. But at least the ride is smooth, not choppy as is usually the experience in sedan cars, and the 4-speed automatic gear-type transmission runs through the gears quickly. Its squeaks or rattles, either, thanks to excellent build quality and rear fit and finish. So, under spoiler in front, on the sides and on the rear add to the sporty appeal.

The suspension system consists of MacPherson struts in front and rear torsion beam. Ventilated disc brakes in front and drums at the rear are standard. Despite some body lean when cornering, the SX4 handles well, like a Suzuki should. The turning radius is tight (5.3 meters) and the car is easy to park. The red illuminated meters on the instrument panel are trendy but get washed out and are hard to read in direct sunlight.

Spacious

The interior is surprisingly spacious with considerable headroom due to the height of the car. The SX4 sedan may be stubby but its interior is stylish. The tall roof and big windows translate into excellent visibility with small triangular windows between the windshield and the A-pillars contributing a unique look, if not enhancing visibility.

The polished metallic trim around the center stack and on the spokes of the leather steering wheel continued with the left-console Center Glock, outside temperature, average and instantaneous fuel consumption and the CD/MP3 player with eight speakers and steering wheel-mounted audio controls add up to an upscale level of equipment seldom found in subcompact cars.

Extra

Those extra features also add to the MSP (suggested retail price) of the SX4 sedan sold here, not being standard equipment in the base model. By the way, in the top-of-the-line 2WD 5-seating sedan sold abroad, the audio system is a 6-disc CD changer with MP3 capability and nine speakers including subwoofer. Cruise control is mounted on the steering wheel and there are side curtain airbags aside from two front airbags.

But including all those things would have pushed up the SRP even more. The SX4 sedan sold here has adequate safety features—dual front SRS airbags and antilock braking system, child seat anchorage and rear door child lock. The trunk is just as deep and massive (315 liters of luggage space) with a big opening and flat floor. The only drawback, as far as cargo room is concerned, is that the rear seatback of the SX4 sedan cannot be folded down. This means that long objects cannot be accommodated.

Summing up, the SX4 sedan looks sporty and is well-equipped, but it is also pricey and could use more power. On the other hand, it is stylish, build quality is superb, the ride is smooth if not quiet (the speakers covers can drown out the engine, wind and road noise), the cabin is reasonably spacious for a subcompact and cargo room is convenient. For the daily commuter and running about town, the SX4, will do nicely.

* * *

TODAY'S BUMPER STICKER. Designed by computer, built by robots, driven by morons.

AFTER THE SWIFT, Suzuki finds the SX4 sedan

A FRONT under spoiler and sides/rear under spoiler enhance the sporty image.

IN THIS ISSUE
DIY: Create storage space/C6

LIFESTYLE

Lito Thelma Sioson San Juan

How to build intimate space in condo /C4

GODIVA
Skin Station
Warts Removal P1??
Diamond Peel+Vit C Facial P1??
Sclerotherapy P1,500
Laser Hair Removal P10,80
the quality you deserve, the price you want

How to energize your home

In these hard times, the more you need to create all the good vibrations

By Riza Patrocio-Regis
Lifestyle Editor

IF DIAMONDS, RUBIES, CARNELIANS, TOPAZES, emeralds, tourmalines, aquamarines, lapis lazuli, amethysts and other gems and crystals can enhance the look and energy of a woman, they can also create a rainbow of light and high frequency vibrations in your home.

CLEAR quartz crystals come in a variety of shapes and forms. They are the most versatile crystals that may be used to heal or energize your home or office.

Crystals are the flowers of the mineral kingdom. If flowers can beautify a living space, so can crystals.

People naturally get attracted to these precious gems and semi-precious rocks because of their beauty and radiance. The big raw pieces not only make good home decor but also amplifiers and transmitters of light and color.

Colors provoke feelings. We say "runny yellow" or "in the pink of health" or "dynamite red."

When we see a rainbow we smile spontaneously. Whether as jewelry or as home accents, crystals vibrate, store, conduct, amplify hues, rainbows and transmit energies according to their qualities and color.

Just as we accessorize with precious stones, we can beautify and energize areas of the home with crystals. Hues of the house represent aspects of our selves. For example, the base-

HOW TO CI

HUBOG&OGHOG — BY JOMAR TEJIDO

A. LIPIN — BY JESS ABEDIN

FULDOK — BY PAPJUAN D. TATUYAN PILAPIL BULING

PUGAD BABOY — BY PH. JUNIOR

DIVINE COMEDY — BY STEVEN PABILONIA

GARFIELD — BY JIM DAVIS

GLAIHIN — BY DARWIN PEREZ

BABY BLUES — BY JERRY SCOTT

ATOMO AND NOBOY — BY LYRA CARCELLANO

LOVEBONDS — BY ELIZABETH HOENIGLO

KIKO MACHORE — BY MANDE ADEDIA

BEN — BY DANIEL SHELTON

DAILY CROSSWORD

By Michael T. Williams
Universalcrossword.com

Sunday's Puzzle Solved

ACROSS
1 Preheated bite
6 Tax collector
10 Cleanse
14 Cemetery
15 NYC number
16 Aggressive
17 Pulled
(frustrated)
18 Sweetened
19 Hole
20 Cannabis bad
21 What Wilma
squeezes bad
out?
23 Quantum
game
24 Chatters
25 Carpenter's
accessories
27 Ring-bearer
28 Captain Video
29 Celebrity herd?
31 Command to
Hee
34 Roman umbrella
carrier
36 Actress Ivanna
37 Plants in Congo
38 "Mona Winner?"
39 Italian holiday
40 Jamboree
41 Ames icon Jean
42 Sandy's
43 Wouldn't bother?
45 Story of Adam
47 Pep, afterwards
48 Nature movie
49 Sea eagle
50 "Oh yeah!"
51 Jams at 33-000?

DOWN
1 Jungle
2 Hundred years
3 Pre-Columbian
of Western
South
4 Partners
(with)
5 Weapon in war
6 Wrapped in a
cocoon
7 Ancient Persian
8 Kicked
boisterously
9 Dominoes
10 Remained a
patron
11 Molecule
building blocks
12 Dugout
13 Idaho potatoes
21 Mad with an axe
22 Proclaim
26 Former ruler
30 Reminiscence
cries
31 Nolan's Mr.
Impossible
32 Injunction and
Cuba
33 Book "like
'48 or a file?"
35 Bake gently
36 Hero
38 Heavy percussion
39 Brother, sister,
or bed
40 Bistro dispute
42 Kicked
boisterously
43 Dominoes
44 Cannabis bad
46 Hawaiian native
48 Wrapped like a
cyclone

49 Magical
51 Slight heave
52 Convalescence
53 Farming of long
ago
54 Actress Kelly
55 ___ League baseball
(retired)
57 Mitchell's pool

58 "Rattled"
expression
59 Bumper on
(pro)
61 Boxing bio
62 Ex of Eartha
63 Hee
(chuckled)

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: People like you, the really friendly cards because you're so good at getting along with others, are often taken for granted by so-called comrades. You investigate unusual phenomena, thus have a strong sense of supernatural and always look for the underdog. This year should be one of the most powerful years of your life. Drawn Big, it's over.

SYMBOLS: Tom Foolery, author Fred Savage, actor, Disney Studio, actor.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Concepts Sudoku

By Dave Green

			6	9	7			
		7				2		
	4	3				9	7	
1								9
3								6
	8	4	1		6	7	3	
			3		4			
		9				5		
		8	2	1	9	6		

Difficulty Level ★★★

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

Tips and programs at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

3	2	7	9	1	5	4	8	6
4	9	5	6	8	7	3	2	1
8	6	1	3	2	4	7	9	5
2	1	6	5	4	9	8	3	7
9	3	8	7	6	1	2	4	5
5	7	4	2	6	3	1	8	9
1	4	9	8	5	2	6	7	3
7	5	3	4	9	6	8	1	2
6	8	2	1	7	8	9	5	4

©2008 Conceptis Puzzles, Inc. Dist. by King Features Syndicate, Inc.

THE MASTER'S bedroom was designed to have a floating bed in the middle, surrounded by oversized picture windows that bring in the magnificent landscape outside.

MINIMALIST interiors highlight the powerful views that can be seen from nearly all sides of the house.

A SMALL waterfall cascading down the façade of the Pung house creates a continuous sound of trickling water, which is a key feature in the home's design.

Mt. Makiling is part of the grand design

LOCATED UNIQUELY IN AN ELEVATED position, Ayala Greenfield faces a 360-degree view that spans Laguna Lake in the north, Mount Makiling in the east, then down to green countryside in the south and Tagaytay Ridge in the west.

This perch gives one a different perspective. To Rick Pung, who has lived in the United States for 20 years, it is like embracing again the land that he's missed, breathing its air and soaking in its sights. He built his dream home upon coming back to the Philippines.

His house sits atop one of the property's highest points, giving him a grand view of Mt. Makiling and the championship golf course of Ayala Greenfield Estates.

"I love the views of the mountain because its image constantly changes throughout the day," he explains. There is no better place to watch the power of nature unfold than from the large picture windows that wrap around Rick's two-story home, creating awesome dark streaks to have been carved out of the sleeping land.

"I wanted to take full advantage of the slope," says Rick. "We didn't want to do drastic excavations on the land, which is why the house is multi-level. It follows the terrain."

While the structure, with its straight lines and perfect 90-degree angles, is a modern masterpiece, it pays respect to the environment surrounding it.

Nature are evident in the design of the home. The kitchen looks out to the golf course and mountains, the dining room has a stunning view of the garden, and even the guest bathroom looks out into the koi pond.

Rick's affinity with water and its multi-dimensional qualities is evident in how the sound of trickling water is incorporated in the architecture. One can be reading breakfast with the windows open, and hear the soothing hum of flowing water coming from outside.

The house's private rooms on the second floor give incredible view of the mountains.

The Kenneth Cobonpue bed in Rachael by matching pendant lights hang low, the lightness of the furniture balances out the astonishing greenery that sweeps in through the windows.

From the outdoor patios and balconies, one looks out to the waterfall that gives the house facade its distinct look, and more breathtaking, as the sun bestows.

"I stop outside and I have the water and the views," says Rick. "At night, all the stars come out. When I'm here, I don't want to go back to the city."

In this place man reconnects with nature. It's an interaction born of vast respect and loving cultivation of nature.

GOINGS ON

Insular Life stages 'Rapunzel'

"RAPUNZEL," THE NEWEST PUBLIC-FULLY family musical to hit the Philippine stage, opens at the Insular Life Theater in Alabang on Aug. 15. Created by David Grave and Marla Kauffman, writers of the Emmy Award-winning television series "Friends," the show gives the classical fairy tale a fresh, ridiculous twist, spiced up by hip new music by Michael Gluck. Directed by critically acclaimed stage actor Michael Williams, with choreography by Breanne Aguirre, "Rapunzel" stars George Schuler, Ria Ortega and Mike Magtalas in the title role, supported by the TOS ensemble. Repeat will run until Sept. 21. Tickets are available through Ticketworld at selected branches of National Book Store and Robinsons Department Store, and outlets at Ayala Malls, Greenhills and Serendra. Call 8873836 or 8827-8336363, e-mail info@theatreboxoffice.com.

Temple professor at UST

Professor John Lent of Temple University will deliver a lecture and handle a seminar-workshop on July 12, 9 a.m.–5 p.m., at the Fray Miguel de Benavides Library auditorium of the University of Santo Tomas. Billed "Cartooning and Comic Art: Catching up in a Digital World," the lecture-workshop will serve as a preliminary activity for the Asian Media Information and Communication Center, July 16-17, at the Manila Hotel. Joining Lent are two Indonesian cartoonists and the Germany-Karl-assisting Filipinos, who will also exhibit their works. An exhibit of the student works of National Artist J. Elizalde Navarro, who was an editor from 1948–1951 of the Varsitarian, the UST student paper, will also be opened. The lecture-workshop is organized by the Philippine Association of Communication Educators, UST Department of Communication and Media Studies and UST Varsitarian. Call 406 1611 loc. 8366/8430.

Asian women artists at UST

The 2008 Rains of Asia art exhibit, featuring works by women artists around Asia, runs at the University of Santo Tomas Museum of Arts and Sciences until July 12. Featuring paintings and other artworks by some 40 women artists from Korea, Japan, Nepal, Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines, the exhibit is curated by Jocelyn Fuller-Calimlim of UST and Pil Kyu Choi of the Suwon Women's College of Korea.

Korean women artists will hold a symposium on July 10. Call 7811915.

UST holds Welcome Walk

The University of Santo Tomas will hold the Thomasian Welcome Walk (TWW) on July 11, 3 p.m. on the UST grounds, España, Manila. The TWW is the yearly UST tradition to welcome freshmen to Asia's oldest university. Highlights are the Mass, the passing through the Arch of the Centuries, the original entrance to the University when the campus was still in Intramuros, and the musical concert in the evening.

"RAPUNZEL," the family musical, opens at Insular Life Theater in Alabang on Aug. 15.

Assumption's 'Romeo and Juliet'

Assumption College's Metro presents "Romeo and Juliet" on July 10, 7 p.m., and July 26, 7 p.m., at Metro Eugenio Theater at the Assumption, Assumption College, San Lorenzo Village, Makati. Assumption's Jubilee celebration is marked this year with an array of performances like "Romeo and Juliet," which is directed by Nino Rubio-Lim. Call 8840881 or 8176767 loc. 1162, 1153.

Book fair

The 12th Philippine Academic Book Fair is on-going until July 13 at Megatrade Hall, SM, Building B, Mall Megamall. With the theme Providing Best Books at Best Prices for Quality Education, the book fair gathers major publishers from the Philippines and abroad to cater to books at publisher's prices. On July 11, 2 p.m., a seminar on Christian Stewardship as the Foundation of our Schools will be conducted by Fr. Daniel Mahan, director, Formation for the Institutes and Conferences of the International Catholic Stewardship Council. The SUN of Stewardship is set on July 11, 2:30 p.m., by Pete Aguilar Jr. while the launch of "Glimpses of Pastoral Ins Message" by Sr. Bernadette Claparols is on 4 p.m. Call 8648882 or 8868881, e-mail smadel@pmail.com.

Polymer seminar

Polymer Products (PNL) Inc. will hold a hands-on introductory course on figurine making, sculpture, stained glass and other suitable resin products on July 29-30. Call 6716807 to 08.

Digital imaging seminar

A seminar on digital imaging is slated on Aug. 11, 17 and 24 by the Federation of Philippine Photographers Foundation (FPPI). Fronnie Millanes is the lecturer. FPPI as at Rm. 302-d, Feati Bldg., A. Soriano Ave., Intramuros, Manila. Call 5317567 or 5360311. E-mail lbellwallmail.com.

How to energize your home

From page C1

ment is usually a symbol of the subconscious, the attic of your higher consciousness.

Positioning a crystal cluster at the entrance of the home energizes the people entering your door, and also expresses harmony and togetherness in the family. Since the living room is for social interaction, double terminated clear quartz cluster and Herkimer diamonds can be spread on the center table. These crystals enhance communication and evoke happy interactions.

Amethyst in the bedroom stimulates powerful sleep, while rose quartz nurtures the heart.

Orange cornelian stirs creativity and can be placed in the kitchen. Citrine, the prosperity crystal, is best placed on your office table to energize your business.

These are just examples of which crystals to use and where to place them to attract and transmute the energy you want in your living environment. For me, I always mix the seven colors of the rainbow to offer visitors a sense of attunement when they see these wondrous crystals.

The author pioneered Crystal Therapy in the Philippines in 1986 and has authored three books on crystal power. She facilitates workshops on crystal healing, stress-movement therapy, nature awareness, yoga and meditation here and abroad for individuals and groups. E-mail her at rmaldia@skyinternet.net.

THE AUTHOR/Nina Fernandez Regis

Positioning a crystal cluster at the entrance of the home energizes the people entering your door.

OPEN PLAN. The public area is divided into flexible spaces for entertaining, dining, cooking, conversation and even sleeping. Complementing the warm and neutral color scheme, the carefully selected pieces of furniture are less interrupting and blend into the space. "We wanted to bring in the natural look with tonda lining. It makes you feel more grounded. The floors and the finishes are warm. Picking up from the colors of the base of the interior architecture, the furniture seems to be sprouting from the floor. There is unity amid the variety," says Pineda.

Creating intimate space in a condo above the mall

Sophisticated design uses concave walls and curved ceiling

By Margo C. Enriquez
Contributor

SINCE THE OWNERS shuttle between their province and Metro Manila, they wanted a pied a terre in the metropolis that would be accessible to the retail building, they find solitude in the thrilled gardens.

Since the couple loves to entertain, they got two units of approximately 60 sq m each and commissioned Rudi Layug + Royal Pineda architecture to remodel the space.

"If you want to live in the city, this is where the action is," says architect Pineda, referring to Serendra's prime spot in Bonifacio Global City and its proximity to many shopping areas and the business center.

FOCAL WALL. The curved concave wall, enhanced by recessed ceiling lights and halogens, lends the warmth usually lacking in modern homes. "The beauty of this space is the conversation between the curved ceiling and curved wall, the relationship between the horizontal and the vertical," says Pineda. Lorna Rubio and Ivan chair with brown seat and leather upholstery and Kenneth Cobonpue's stool floor lamp are a blend of ethnicity and modernity.

Bowed architecture

The entire unit is curved in periphery that followed Serendra's bowed architecture. By erecting drywall walls to combine the two units, the abode became fan-shaped.

Instead of a square box, the subtly concave walls added depth and dispersed sound, thus benefiting the unit from the hustle of the outside.

The curved ceiling treatment, which echoes the concave walls, was made more pronounced with cove lighting. Hence, the curvature of the walls and ceiling pulls the eye to the panoramic windows that look out at Serendra's fountain at the piazza.

Pineda says the view evokes a stay in a hotel in Ubud, where one sees nothing but people and dine down below.

The finishes are woods, stone and glass. Wood veneers are popular with today's architects as they are environmentally friendly. Veneers are thin slices of wood that are attached over core panels to create walls, doors, tops and facades.

For solid surfaces, Corian was used for the kitchen counter top, while natural stone such as gray travertine and Carrara were used for bathroom counters. These luxury counters were trimmed with stainless steel for a silky appearance.

"It's like the clean edging of a well-tailored shirt," says Pineda.

Many white walls that bounce the light and frosted glass to coordinate contrast with the taupe Italian tile flooring and mahogany boards in the master bedroom.

Flexible space

Space planning called for a more flexible scheme, so the owners should have various functions.

"Instead of compartmentalizing, we created the illusion of more space by using one space for other purposes," says Pineda. "The open planning is dictated by the owners' modern lifestyle, which is informal but sophisticated. Since the kitchen is revealed, it is revealed to be functional."

Upon entry the visitor feels the bulk of the condo—the kitchen has convenient area.

"We were dictated by the fan shape of the unit. That's why the island counter has become the site of entertainment," explains Pineda. The counter's sculptural quality, a solid block of Corian, is now the focal point of the living.

The kitchen, furnished with dark glass shelves, frosted glass cabinets and German hardware, was custom fitted to the host's design. The plasma TV is

(NEXT PAGE C2)

CEILING CURVE. Made from gypsum board panels, with incandescent dimmable lighting systems, the curved ceiling defines the architecture. Once a square, curved ceilings are the new modern classics. They add depth and movement to an interior design's plane.

ISLAND COUNTER. The cool and clear lines in the sink's countertop are. Transition from Corian's wood veneer indicates where the work area ends and the hospitality begins. The cantilevered wood veneer dining bar and stools and nylon mesh by Layug were set up the solid space. The results are remarkable.

KITCHEN BAR. The kitchen is designed like a system of modules of furniture and cabinetry. The plasma TV is given the same importance as the area.

DINING AREA. Combinations of warm wood and light colors makes the space cozy yet open and airy. Rudi Layug's circular glass-topped table with X-shaped metal base is given a funky finish. It is teamed with side chairs with cut-out backings.

ART: spacious interiors of St. Francis Shangri-La Place suites

JACUZZI and spacious walk-in closet in the master's bedroom

ST. FRANCIS' rich interiors made accessible to all things and community that includes Edsa Shangri-La Hotel and Shangri-La Plaza Mall

The height of condo living

TOWERING AT 60 stories, the St. Francis Shangri-La Place is the tallest twin-tower project of the Ayala Group.

The condominium units range from a fully studio to one- to three-bedroom units with their own balconies and even larger living spaces.

A single penthouse is worth at 250 sq m. The grand penthouse spans three levels from the 59th floor, and ownership anywhere from $1.5-400 sq m.

The luxurious, four-bedroom residence comes with a private infinity pool, roof deck, glass-enclosed sky lounge and sky garden.

St. Francis is designed by the Hong Kong-architectural company Wong and Tung International Ltd. in collaboration with Filipino firm Pastor + Casas.

Within walking distance from various items of mass transportation, the condominium is near Edsa Shangri-La Hotel and Shangri-La Plaza Mall.

St. Francis Shangri-La Place has a clubhouse, gym, multipurpose function rooms, adult game room, kids' playroom, steam bath, sauna, swimming pool, kiddie pool, Wi-Fi and 24-hour concierge.

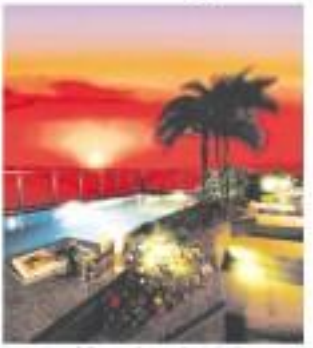
Over 700 units have already been snapped up since November 2005.

"We attract discerning and discriminating buyers who appreciate value for money and the quality and standard of a Ayala Group development," said Vince Reymon, VP for Shares, Shang Properties, Inc.

"Those who are used to the standards of Shangri-La can expect to see the same in our residential development."

The St. Francis Shangri-La Place expects completion in early 2009.

Visit the St. Francis Shangri-La Place showroom at 3/L, Shangri-La Plaza Annex, Edsa and Shaw Blvd., Mandaluyong. Call: 6345870, 8348111 and 6348080. E-mail: sales@theplaceresidences.com.



THE PENTHOUSES occupy floors area from 518-400 sqm., with a private infinity pool, roof deck, glass-enclosed sky lounge and a sky garden.

THE BANG & Olufsen video exhibit at The Gallery Greenbelt 5

Sleek audio-video show

THE GALLERY OF Greenbelt 5 was the venue for Bang & Olufsen's recent launch of its premium products.

Managing director of Bang & Olufsen Asia Pacific Lars Myrup flew in to impress the crowd with his company's commitment to world-class quality in its audio-video products.

Dunhill spiced up the event with models donning off the fashion brand's latest collection along with Bang & Olufsen's sleek and powerful equipment.

Steinway & Sons Piano provided the lyric piano used by guest pianist Raul Sunico, who played with Bartei Fenato Habib. The piano playing was also to demonstrate the accurate capabilities of Bang & Olufsen's Beolab 5 active music chain 5.0 system.

Patient Trade offered Stanley Sapphire Gin, 42 Below, Bacardi and other fine wines through out the night.

Among the guests were Makati Councilor Gabriel Toledo, Eva Cortes, Reynaldo B. Benson, Alex Marquis Rivadeo, Leo Valdez, Hyacinth Valencia, Helen Ong, Carlo Lihal, Arthur Ryan, Tess Perez-Tobias, Alberto Lopez and Emily Lopez.

ROGER Jonsson, Lars Myrup (managing director Bang & Olufsen Asia Pacific Region) and Edith Perez-Ico (Dunhill)

REMITO Hall, Lisa Macuja-Elizalde, Leo Valdez and Raul Sunico

MODELS wearing Dunhill's Spring/Summer collection

FORTUNE Lorenzo and Adee Ong

JINKY Lapitol, Myngha Palencia, Bea Lapitol

YVETTE Perez, Tess Perez-Tobias, Mario Katigbak

LIFESTYLE Do-it-yourself

D.I.Y.

Text account feedback: marlyn_flor.yanet.ago@manage to SMS Global or SM Smart.

Artist Aaron Barrera and Marlon Lopez

Creative storage ideas

WITH SO MANY high-rise developments and compact homes, storage has become a necessity. We must be very creative to find ways for "potential storage."

There are many ways to use the various containers available in creating storage, follow these simple steps:

First identify what you need to keep.

Assign the space.

Look for the perfect container to accommodate the items you want to store.

Some tips to consider:

1. Make sure you have access to items you feel you will use often.

2. Label the containers with a list of contents. You can also stick photos of the items on the surface of the container to help identify what is inside.

3. Stackable containers are great to use so you can see what is inside right away.

4. Stackable containers are space savers.

5. Consider stowaway containers if you are moving to/from items.

In a closet where you've built in shelves or drawers, install a pull-out shoe rack. The space can accommodate three pairs so they are positioned side by side.

Floor doors in plastic bins or shoe containers—they are good space savers because you can stack them up. You can also use mobile stair-stool boxes and since they are see-through, put a photograph of the shoe on the surface so you know what is in the box.

If you have many little things lying around the house, grab some of those plastic hand containers. These can help you organize yourself. They are perfect for accessories, makeup, office supplies, etc.

Install a floor-layered drawer unit. The space can accommodate three pairs so they are positioned side by side.

AIRTIGHT containers

PLACE shoes in plastic bins.

STACKABLE containers are space savers.

SEE-THROUGH containers

BLK chest with six shelves or drawers, installs stable layered drawer unit.

PHOTOS BY EDGAR ALMONTE

Month-long home fair

HOME stylish, minimalist look in the living room, think simple with a splash of color.

THE JULY BONANZA: Department store celebrates "Living and Beyond," a month-long Home Fair featuring a wide selection of affordable home essentials, accessories and decor.

Breathe life into your living room with stylish accents like ornamental candles and candle holders, incense sticks, picture frames, oil burners, artificial trees, colorful artificial flowers, statues, ceramic figurines and ceramic lampshades, plush rugs, silky throw pillows, geometric and wall clocks.

For your bedroom linens, choose from fabrics and beddings, comforters, vacuum pillows and pillowcases, slip-on lamps, bunny or duvet curtains, duvet pads, and other bedroom accessories will also make your bedroom a delight to come home to.

Tired of an outdated kitchen?

CHROME magazine rack, ceramic 4-pc kitchen accessory, corner kitchen unit, drawer-organizer.

16-PIECE dinner set

Jazz it up with an array of kitchen fundamentals such as glass canisters, stainless cutlery and knife holders, dropping boards, juicers, baking dishes, fondue sets and an extensive range of small appliances.

Entertaining guests will be a breeze, meanwhile, with quaint cups and saucers, glassware, fruit forks, party trays, ceramic teapot or iced coffee mugs. Bowls, trays, bread bins, plates, glass holders, dinner plates, ceramic and sugar bowls, glass platter sets, fruit holders, and stoneware canvas in pretty designs will also make family meals special.

For your bedroom, drink out stainless shower caddies, luxurious bath towels, anti-slip mats, poolit line, towels, shaggy bath rugs, tile soap dishes, flower arrangements, shower curtains and other decorative items.

Smart storage solutions will tidy up any room in the house. There are shoe drawers, clothes racks, laundry hampers, stackable organizers, food inspectors, bin plus other plasticware that you can put out of sight but close at hand.

Robinsons Department Store's Home Fair gives you a chance to win one of 3000 appliances for every P999 single receipt cash or charge purchase from the Metrobasic Department. Cardholders of Go Robinsons get one additional raffle coupon for every P500 single receipt purchase using their credit card.

And for a minimum single receipt purchase of P500 from the Metrobasic Department, a customer gets to purchase one functional storage chair for only P199.75 (originally priced at P299.75).

"Living and Beyond" is ongoing simultaneously until July 31 in all Robinsons Department Store branches (except Cebu), Robinsons Malls, Robinsons Malls, Starmall and Festival Mall in Alabang; Mega Mall Pampanga and Dagupan, Limketkai Mall, Cagayan de Oro City; and Puregold Monumento. For more information, visit www.robinsons.ph.

HOME Essentials comforter set

THROW pillowcase ranges, throw pillowcase cushion inserts, throw pillow case with beads, all from Home Essentials, Gordon Baro chandelier.

Creating intimate space ...

DESIGN SOLUTION: The triangular ledge and tufted headboard are the way to fit the bed in a room with an odd corner.

Rectangular Co

strategically placed at the focal point, allowing it to be viewed from both the living room and dining spaces. The cabinet doors can be removed during party time.

The den can be part of the whole public space for socialization. "If there are no guests, the corner can enjoy the luxury of space," says the architect. Or it can be set off with the use of sliding glass panels for privacy.

The den's sofa can be transformed into a bed at night, turning the space into a guest room with its own bathroom and storage.

"This gives the client the feeling that the total area is maximized," says Rhoda.

Intimacy

To create intimacy, Build Living + Royal Panda Architecture used rough upholstered chairs, dark, warm hues, and discreet lighting. The furniture pieces' condition easily, ultimately such as abaca rope, rhodial weaves, tacapole with metals and glass instead of the conventional synthetic materials.

Black is an accent to such accessories as wine or lacquered trays, platter and wooden trays.

To visually enlarge the space and to hide structural elements, bonus in the powder room and the pool in the living room were clad with mirrors. In the latter, the mirror reflection enables the pool to blend with the environment. In the powder room, the mirror-clad frame creates more height and softer natural light.

Like the rest of the unit, the master bedroom is also cozy, as the walls are not provided to nooks either. The walls originally skewed out, with one wall meeting on the bedroom side. To create intimacy in the accessories room, the design was built a triangular head board.

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Bonnie O. Valuerte

Willie told: Be fair in 'Wowowee'

By Marinel R. Cruz

WILLIE REVILLAME, HOST OF THE controversial noontime game show "Wowowee" on ABS-CBN, has received a reprimand from his employers for "forcing an elderly contestant" in the show's "Hep Hep Hurray" segment.

"Wowowee" hostess and head Malou "Mic" Almeda sent a memo dated June 20 to Revillame, reminding him to

WILLIE, D3

MY AYENG! Jao Mapa (back row, second from left) works with Aere Kordilyera-starred cast and crew, plus Meart Evangelista on the side row, in this Hawaiian production.

'Local artists are better-versed in this culture, which is often misrepresented in the movies'

True home-grown talents

By Vincent Cabreza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—A GROUP OF LOCAL artists called Arte KordiLyera (AK) has been marking ordinary Cordilleran lives in set in mainstream film productions, so audiences may get closer to the truth about life in the uplands.

The film, "Ay Ayeng" ("Echoes of Wisdom"), addresses problems about an Ifugao culture that was Meart Evangelista and Jao Mapa,

TRUE, D2

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DID YOU KNOW...

First digital cinema opens today at SM

E-CINEMA, THE country's first real digital cinema, will be formally inaugurated today at The Block, SM City North EDSA.

The cinema many operations with "Journey To the Center Of the Earth," which stars Brendan Fraser. It will be shown in its 3D version.

D-Cinema has hi-definition video projectors, for quality sound and images.

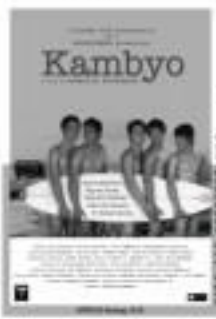
The technical set-up was made possible by the joint efforts of Asenyo Tech Inc. and Christie Digital Systems USA.

Call 5099452 or e-mail dcinema@asenyotech.com.

* * *

'Karaoke Dreams'

THE DIVERSIFIED economics for 9?-igious contemplating living abroad is dramatized in "Karaoke Dreams," a play to be presented by the Philippine Educational Theater Association (Peta). Venue is the artistry hub, Insular Life Pilot, July 12, 4 p.m. and 7 p.m.



showing exclusively at
MOVIEWORLD
July 9

True home-grown talents

Frontpage Col

will not whether homegrown talents can matter from celibe success.

It had a Philippine premiere on July 4 at the Baguio Convention Center to honor the works of its cast and its young said Mario Rosario. All cultured director.

Book character

Shawna Jea, a Fil-Am actress one in the movie, said that idea for "Sy Ayong" was developed in 2007 by Abdin Pearl Film Productions as a P10-million budget. It tells of an Ilocano teacher who returns to his hometown to empower her community.

Evangelista plays the protagonist Ayong, who was patronized after a character in "Maestra Isabel"—a novel written by Rizalo Santos that is said to be secretly circulated in Hawaii.

Rosario said Ali was formed on a date: "Ali decided that we could train people in art, and it grew [into something better] and I can see [now] something better. I can see learned something new about the culture and how it has been misrepresented in cinema."

Performance artist Eddy Ilarpano, one of the founders of the Baguio Community of Volunteers Movements, said Ali's efforts could evolve into an industry because the city itself has become a "living studio" for Metro Manila-based filmmakers.

Half the cast

"Many films have been made here and in other parts of the Cordilleras because of the landscape. But we now have homegrown cinematographers, filmmakers, writers, artists and voice talents who are better versed in the culture," Ilarpano said. "Filmmakers can make good movies about Igorots and film workers here in half the cost of shipping Manila talents."

Mayor Jose Dao "Sy Ayong" as its crowdrush film. "This is my first time to encounter a group of aspiring actors from the region," he said. "I think this is a positive direction for Filipino filmmaking."

Several local groups have been producing films starring local celebrities. But these are sold via an underground market and are often designed as religious testimonials.

Japanese filmmaker Eiji Imaizumi produced a $1-million film about the Cordilleras in 2000, called "Along Should Dream," with amateur actors and villagers, including the pioneering Pinoy independent filmmaker Kidlat Tahimik, Kapuna said.

Empowerment

"Sy Ayong," he pointed out, is advocating empowerment of Cordilleran. It hope to your northern Luzon and will be featured in this year's Cinemalaya independent film festival.

Five premiered in Stewart in June, "Sy Ayong" also stars Maria Isabel Lopez, John Arcilla, and Cordilleran actor Alquiros.

CINEMA ACCESS: 635-5555

MOVIEWORLD

ROBINSONS MOVIEWORLD CINEMA MOVIE GUIDE

www.robinsonsmovieworld.com

GALLERIA

1 HANCOCK	6 WANTED
2 THE INCREDIBLE HULK	7 PAUPAHAN
3 GET SMART	8 IndieTone: BARAKO
4 WARLORDS	9 KAMBYO
5 HANCOCK	10 MY MONSTER MOM

ERMITA

1 WANTED	
2 HANCOCK	6 THE INCREDIBLE HULK
3 GET SMART	7 PAUPAHAN
4 WARLORDS	8 KAMBYO
5 HANCOCK	9 MY MONSTER MOM

METRO EAST

1 HANCOCK	6 THE INCREDIBLE HULK
2 HANCOCK	6 WANTED
3 GET SMART	7 KAMBYO
4 WARLORDS	8 MY MONSTER MOM

NOVALICHES

1 WANTED	3 HANCOCK
2 MY MONSTER MOM	4 WARLORDS

PIONEER

1 WANTED	3 WARLORDS
2 MY MONSTER MOM	4 HANCOCK

STA. ROSA

1 WARLORDS	5
2 HANCOCK	6
3 WANTED	7
4 MY MONSTER MOM	8

LIPA

1 HANCOCK	5
2 WANTED	6
3 MY MONSTER MOM	7
4 GET SMART	8

DASMARIÑAS

1 HANCOCK	5
2 WARLORDS	6
3 MY MONSTER MOM	7
4 WANTED	8

IMUS

1 MY MONSTER MOM	5
2 WANTED	6
3 WARLORDS	7
4 HANCOCK	8

ANGELES

1 ALONE	5 WANTED
2 HANCOCK	6 MY MONSTER MOM

STARMILLS

1 WANTED	6 ALONE
2 HANCOCK	5 THE HAPPENING
3 MY MONSTER MOM	6 PATHOLOGY

BACOLOD

1 SEX AND THE CITY	5
2 PAUPAHAN	6
3 WANTED	7
4 HANCOCK	8
5 MY MONSTER MOM	
6 ALONE	

ILOILO

1 GET SMART	5
2 THE INCREDIBLE HULK	6
3 WANTED	7
4 HANCOCK	8
5 MY MONSTER MOM	
6 ALONE	

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THE PODIUM

WANTED

HANCOCK

LATE SCREENINGS

NARNIA

CINEMA 1
Admission Price: P160

1 WANTED	1 HANCOCK	1 HANCOCK
2 THE HAPPENING	2 WANTED	2 WANTED
3 HANCOCK	3 WANTED	3 HANCOCK
4 WANTED	4 RESERVED	4 HANCOCK
5 THE WARLORDS	5 SAY SWEET	5 THE WARLORDS
6 MY MONSTER MOM	6 PAUPAHAN	6 WANTED
7 THE INCREDIBLE HULK	7 MY MONSTER MOM	7 THE WARLORDS
8 RESERVED	8 HANCOCK	8 ALONE
DEPARTED	9 KUNG FU PANDA	9 THE INCREDIBLE HULK
CAPPUCCINO	10 THE INCREDIBLE HULK	10 GET SMART
RESERVED	11 HANCOCK	11 MY MONSTER MOM
VIDEO STORE CLUB	12 GET SMART	
RESERVED		

1 HANCOCK	1 HANCOCK	1 HANCOCK
2 WANTED	2 THE HAPPENING	2 WANTED
3 THE WARLORDS	3 HANCOCK - PRINCE CASPIAN	3 THE WARLORDS
4 THE INCREDIBLE HULK	4 WANTED	4 THE INCREDIBLE HULK
5 HANCOCK	5 THE WARLORDS	5 GET SMART
6 HANCOCK	6 HANCOCK	6 HANCOCK
7 RESERVED	7 HANCOCK	7 MY MONSTER MOM
8 RESERVED	8 MY MONSTER MOM	
9 RESERVED	9 KUNG FU PANDA	
10 RESERVED	10 SAY SWEET	
11 RESERVED	11 THE INCREDIBLE HULK	
12 RESERVED	12 LANTERN	

1 HANCOCK	1 HANCOCK	1 HANCOCK
2 WANTED	2 MY MONSTER MOM	2 WANTED
3 THE WARLORDS	3 THE WARLORDS	3 HANCOCK
4 THE INCREDIBLE HULK	4 RESERVED	4 THE INCREDIBLE HULK
5 HANCOCK	5 HANCOCK	5 MY MONSTER MOM
6 MY MONSTER MOM	6 THE INCREDIBLE HULK	6 WANTED
7 KUNG FU PANDA	7 RESERVED	7 THE WARLORDS
8 HANCOCK	8 PAUPAHAN	8 HANCOCK
9 PAUPAHAN	9 MY MONSTER MOM	
10 SAY SWEET - PRINCE CASPIAN		
11 GET SMART		

1 HANCOCK	1 WANTED	1 THE WARLORDS
2 THE WARLORDS	2 HANCOCK	2 MY MONSTER MOM
3 WANTED	3 THE WARLORDS	3 THE INCREDIBLE HULK
4 THE INCREDIBLE HULK	4 MY MONSTER MOM	4 WANTED

SOON TO OPEN

LUZON

1 THE HAPPENING	1 MY MONSTER MOM	1 WANTED
2 PAUPAHAN	2 GET SMART	2 MY MONSTER MOM
3 HANCOCK	3 HANCOCK	3 THE HAPPENING
4 THE WARLORDS	4 WANTED	4 WANTED
5 WANTED		
6 MY MONSTER MOM		
7 ARMOR		
8 THE INCREDIBLE HULK		

1 WANTED	1 HANCOCK	1 WANTED
2 GET SMART	2 GET SMART	2 MY MONSTER MOM
3 MY MONSTER MOM	3 MY MONSTER MOM	3 HANCOCK
4 HANCOCK	4 WANTED	4 THE WARLORDS
5 THE WARLORDS	5 THE WARLORDS	

1 HANCOCK	1 WANTED	1 WANTED
2 WANTED	2 MY MONSTER MOM	2 MY MONSTER MOM
3 THE INCREDIBLE HULK	3 HANCOCK	3 THE WARLORDS
4 PAUPAHAN	4 THE WARLORDS	4 MY MONSTER MOM
5 SURROGATE MOVIE		
6 MY MONSTER MOM		

1 WANTED	1 HANCOCK	1 HANCOCK
2 THE WARLORDS	2 WANTED	2 WANTED
3 MY MONSTER MOM	3 MY MONSTER MOM	3 ARMOR
4 THE INCREDIBLE HULK	4 HANCOCK	4 MY MONSTER MOM
5 MY MONSTER MOM		
6 SURROGATE MOVIE		

1 HANCOCK	1 WANTED	1 HANCOCK
2 WANTED	2 THE WARLORDS	2 WANTED
3 THE HAPPENING	3 MY MONSTER MOM	3 ARMOR
4 HANCOCK	4 HANCOCK	4 MY MONSTER MOM
5 WANTED		

SOON TO OPEN

VISAYAS • MINDANAO

1 WANTED	1 THE INCREDIBLE HULK	1 WANTED
2 THE INCREDIBLE HULK	2 HANCOCK	2 GET SMART
3 PAUPAHAN	3 WANTED	3 MY MONSTER MOM
4 WANTED	4 MY MONSTER MOM	4 HANCOCK
5 HANCOCK	5 RESERVED	5 RESERVED
6 MY MONSTER MOM	6 RESERVED	6 RESERVED
7 THE WARLORDS	7 RESERVED	7 THE INCREDIBLE HULK
8 RESERVED	8 RESERVED	8 THE WARLORDS

SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

Regine funny as Kim Samsoon

REGINE VELASQUEZ IS SUCH A NATURAL in "Kim Samsoon," as is her chef who's hungry by love. I asked her RV Ogie Alcasid if he gave Regine comedy acting tips, since he's a "Dabiddo Gang" mainstay.

"No need to teach her," beams Ogie. "She's naturally funny." Their fun-filled moment together? "In a horror booth in Los Angeles," says Ogie. "During the gay, I was surprised it's pretty funny. Pero ako pa ang nasabot! Is masi'dsarawan!"

The couple that laughs together stays together. Regine and Ogie have mastered the right mix of smirks, laughter and love.

Celebrating life

Cee Grellow is back in full swing after her harrowing baby ordeal. She and ex-husband Rank are hosting an art exhibit cum thanksgiving party at their Magnet Gallery branch in Kamuning on July 8.

That's art celebrating life! Even if Cee-ann no longer a couple, Cee and Rank remain friends, business partners and, most of all, partners in four handsome boys. Rank was with them duringthe Cee' captivity. (One man is studying in the US.) Their bond is rock solid.

Now that Cee and cameraman Jimmy Encarnacion and Angel Valdezmeza are well on the way to full recovery, it's high time a documentary was thrown—including footage taken in the kidnapped Jan. Cee's the exclusive story behind the story in "Kidnap" on ABS-CBN, July 13, 10 p.m. *Cee to Cee!*

Like his character

Dietcher Ocampo gives the performance of his life in "Tim Pa Lamang," as a rebel who falls hard for a woman who changes his life forever.

"I'm so much like my character Miguel, hopes-high-ends-crg setting in," reveals Dietcher. "I've done many doings, for love. Like the time I inexcessively fought with a GF and signed her the whole day, then surprised her with a candlelit dinner by the pool in a hotel with a sun player."

In his new love der musician girl spurred during the press preview of his new song? "My name was my clue," Dier says, laughing. Real love lesson he has learned? "Was just here to keep on loving, as will stop learning." Straight from the heart of a man who find heart to fly who's as heartbroken.

Pinoy cocktails

"The Ferrets versus pogs over the Pinoy-made (some) liqueur that I brought," says Christine Dayrit, vice-president-chair of the Film Development Council of the Philippines, via SMS all the way from Paris. "Let us hit 'yung drink, which was served during the opening night of the Pinoy film fest here. Its much 'yung mga French champagne."

E nonsiyan que los franceis aimi tomar un americano cuando ay en ik la boiano ahilipino que da nos films. (Seems like the French have fallen in love with Pinoy cocktails as much as with our films.)

Tickled pink

Richard Gutierrez is the new endorser of Pinaltron as the real gentleman in pink. Since if he plays tough on screen, he has no qualms about letting his soft side show in audio-cive work, like in his Greenpeace advocacy.

"We chose him because he epitomizes the beautiful gentleman," says Pinaltron Baby Cosmetics. She adds that one's skin will be in the pink of health with the popular dermatological elixir's line of products. Aside from RC Cosmopolitan and his sexy cameo, Pinaltron keeps Richard tickled pink!

Back to basics

With "Who We Are," the band's fourth album, Lifehouse is enjoying the fruits of its success.

The multi-platinum 2000 debut produced "Hanging by a Moment," which became Billboard's Most Played Song. And in 2005, "You and Me" set a record for spending more than 80 weeks on the Hot 100 chart.

In the new album, singer-songwriter Jason Wade—along with drummer Rick Woolstenhulme and bassist Bryce Soderberg—gets back to the basics of what made him free from the band while still a teenager. "This time around it was about not having any preconceived notions," confesses Jason. "It was about letting the vape machine out and getting the music down to some extremely. I'm writing from an honest place, not thinking about what's going to have it, what they're going to think or how they're going to interpret it. The lyrics can't be truthful. They have to hit you right in the heart." Catch the high-octane band Lifehouse live on July 5th at the Araneta Coliseum. The band will give life to the concert venue as they bring the house down.

E-mail: entertainment@philstar.com

Unique life never-lasting

By Oliver M. Palumbarit
Contributor

IN THE UNIQUE WORLD OF THE fantasy-comedy series "Pushing Daisies," life and death are normal occurrences, but one guy wields extraordinary power over them.

Pie connoisseur Ned (Lee Pace), learned about his gift the hard way. As a boy, his magic touch instantly revived his dead mother but, unknown to him at the time, each resurrection has a price: his neighbor drops dead shortly, as if the cosmos required to maintain a balance. But when Ned is tasked to by his mom at bed time, neither knew that a kiss on the lad's forehead would prove fatal. For good.

Many years later, he's faced with the decision to keep somebody alive for longer than the allowed time: Ned, now a baker at his own store, The Pie Hole, partners up with private investigator Emerson Cod (Chi McBride) to help solve crime-related deaths, initially for reward money.

Sweet reunion

One such unsolved case leads them to Ned's old childhood sweetheart Charlotte "Chuck" Charles (Anna Friel), who was her homecoming as the fiancée of an unknown attacker. Ned narrates her, and Chuck soon becomes privy to his secret. Death claims someone nearby, but Ned's too excited about their unexpected reunion to care. Sadly, they can never, ever have skin contact again, lest she goes for all eternity.

"Pushing Daisies," created by Bryan Fuller ("Wonderfalls") and executive produced by Barry Sonnenfeld ("Men In Black," "Addams Family"), runs a Golden Globe nominee for best Television Series (Musical or Comedy). Interestingly, the show mostly follows a typical crime-solving chore, but its narrative sometimes unfolds deliberately quirky elements.

The antithesis Tim Burton engineers, a mix of bright colors and over-designs, happily gives the show a glossy, innocent look. The imaginatively written voiceover narration of Jim Lampe is smooth, too. It expanded by segue to funny or freaky flashbacks and utterly potato sack well-placed analogies for the Ned-Chuck relationship.

The "surreal" world allows for cute or creative liberties: in one point, for example, the diminutive waitress Olive Snook (Kristin Chenoweth) sang an impromptued version of "Hopelessly Devoted to You," a member Anonymous of her unrequited feelings for Ned, her employer.

Easy viewing

The show occasionally employs visual effects such as animation, bringing to life Ned and Chuck's fun moments of imperfect play people. Set again neighborhood-ess pizza eatery, such as those in greedy sneaky shop owner Olly Jackson's (guest Molly Shannon) funky flashback sequence, also add web-wise complement.

"Pushing Daisies" is easy viewing, thanks to the show's emotionally pleasing, color-worldliness. The superb voice complaints on the touch-free romance gets perplexing at times, but the episodic stories are, for the most part, well-penned and lively.

(The series airs Tuesdays, 8 p.m., on 2nd season.)

Friends and lovers in the City of Light

By the Inquirer and Philstar.net Entertainment staff

ON HER STUTTER TOWARD SINGER-actress Sharon Cuneta didn't have much time to savor the sights and sounds of the City of Light.

"I have a final exam in Humanities due this week," she said upon arrival at the Charles De Gaulle Airport Sunday last week. "It's taking the test online."

She brought a laptop, a stash of textbooks and other school stuff. (She is enrolled in the UP Open University.)

She was in the French capital to attend the gala screening of Chito Roño's "Caregiver," one of 47 Filipino films showcased at the Paris Cinema International Film Festival.

At the SRC Rétrospective where the screening was held, Sharon was mobbed by camera-toting fans, as expected. All hell broke loose when her good friend Judy Ann Santos with husband Ryan Agoncillo joined her at the screening.

Digna Santiago of the Film Development Council of the Philippines (FDCP) described the scene at the MK2 as "sheer pandemonium." She noted, "Tickets were sold out days before. The 600-seater cinema was filled to capacity. Our French hosts didn't expect this kind of warm reception from our compatriots."

In her speech before the screening, Sharon said "Caregiver" increased her admiration and respect for overseas Filipino workers "by 1,000 percent."

Fun tales

Judy Ann and Ryan, who were invited by the city government of Paris to attend the screening of "Daming" in the festival, have their own fun stories to tell about our kababayan abroad.

While shopping in La Boutique, Ju-dy Ann was accosted by a Pinoy fan, Ryan recalled. "But she couldn't remember my name," Judy Ann said, laughing heartily. "She knew me as 'the cook on television.' I gave her a clue: 'Isabella.'"

Although she has asked for her autograph, she was still clueless about Judy's name. "She didn't even phrase at the autograph. I had signed in bold letters, Judy Ann Santos."

Arriving in Paris Friday evening, the engaged couple went straight to the Eiffel Tower. "We were here in May, but we wanted to see it at night, all lit up," Judy said.

Doesn't she?

Wilma Doesn has a special guest tonight at 10 on QTV: It's "One Proud Mama"—her own mom, Inez Doesn.

THE WOMEN IN MONTREAUX
The 42nd Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland, which runs until July 19, featured (from left) US pop-rock artist Sheryl Crow, Canadian country singer k. d. lang, and reverse folk singer Joan Baez last weekend.

Wilma recalls how as a kid, she was ridiculed because of her dark skin. Mom Inez always turned up to her rescue, she says.

New from Britain

LONDON—Pop star Kylie Minogue, former soap actress who became one of the world's most famous female recording artists, received the Order of the British Empire on Thursday.

Minogue, who recently overcame breast cancer, bounced as the CBE was presented to her by Prince Charles, who stood in for Queen Elizabeth at the Buckingham Palace cites.

"It makes me feel both humble and proud to be recognized for doing a job that I love so much," she said.

Earlier this year, Minogue received one of Patrol's top cultural awards when she was made a Chevalier dans l'ordre des Arts et Lettres (Knight of Arts and Letters) for "the cultural pleasure she has given French people."

Reuters

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Top of the talk shows

For those who missed last week-end's gabfests on TV (And why were we moved, if we are moved.):

•Vilma Santos, on being romantically linked to Mark Herras:

"Friends lang talaga kami. Never naging lovers." (Okay, magsuso ka Ate!)

•Judy Ann Santos, on her engagement to Ryan Agoncillo:

"Nasa isipang edad na rin kasi. Pero I think it's gonna be a long engagement." (Dasalin n'everyone being engaged ito!)

•Kristine Hermosa, on news that former boyfriend Diether Ocampo is dating a socialite:

"Mapunan na nacin... he deserves to be happy... even coke... kung coke pa na nagpapa-pure ng buhay ko, ayoko silang makasira ng pagkatao. Sobrang sira pa-nga! Ay sili sa depression." (Ano raw?!)

•Piolo Pascual, on her life in the fast lane:

"Hindi pa ako nakaka-adjust talaga at bukas dito. Minsan nga nakiya ako kasi, nasabihan nila na 'Emperorsi' yun pagkatapos 'yon ang nakikita nila. Pinilit raw ako Pilipinas. Ka-pakiramdam lang naman dito sa mga tao na pag nakakakita ng artista, ang hahabol lang nila ay pangalan. Pag-uwi nila dito kung tatanungin, pangalan lang ang hinid ng mo." (Dapat pala kasi Ano nga?)

•Diether Ocampo, on working with Daddy Consolacion:

"Walang mali mga pagkakataon na na-uutusan ako ng mga tao-tampa. Kasi dati pinapatawag ko lang siya, ngayon nakakaramdam ako ng... kumbaga ako nakakaramdam ako ng pangamba. Mga ganun, e. Minsan nung nakaka-kita hindi nagbago ang tawag ko." (Ganu naman.)

•Sharon Cuneta on reports that she and John Lozada got over on dinner:

"Hindi ko alam. Pagkain na naman 'yon. Hindi naman." (Ogaw!)

•Asker on the same reports:

"Ayoko naman pong masyadong big-yan ng bahay." (Hindi rin, promise.)

•Gretchen Barretto, on the controversies surrounding her, particularly the incident in a Makati hotel, where her credit card was declined:

"Dumi ito nung nangyaring hayan. Ayaw gusto ko ring mawiwisan ang isang moment na bahay... nagpa-Gretchen Barretto na hindi kinis ng kahit sino. Pasok colong manakaw nung hindi pinag-usapan." (Yeah!)

(Gretchen, We Bless)

Willie told: Be fair in 'Wowowee'

From page D1

remain impartial in the conduct of the game segments.

The memo was prompted by a complaint from the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB).

In her letter to Revilla, Almodiel said that in the June 5 episode of "Wowowee," the host "appeared to have pronounced two young contestants (sic) losing an elderly contestant with the game by declaring, 'Mo- wala! Konsuyo (sic) ang mga lolo't lola nyo.'"

Ch 7 show

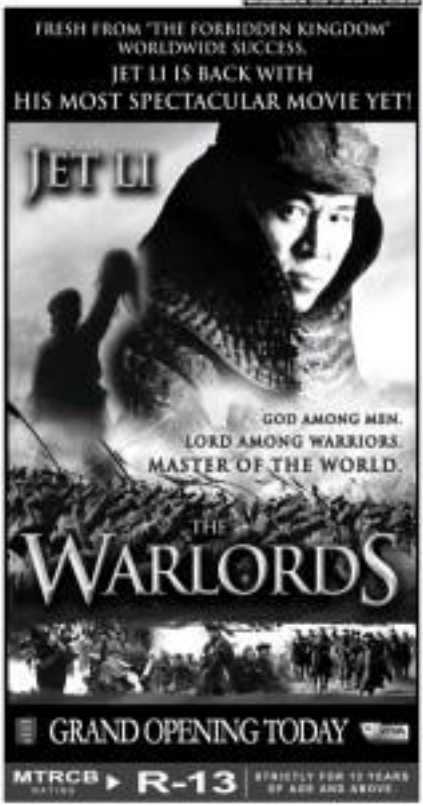
A complaint was also filed with the MTRCB by the Bilanes ng Makabagong Pilipinong May Kapansanan Inc. or BMPKI against "Pal Haim," a Channel 7 movie.

In a letter addressed to MTRCB Chair Marissa Laguardia, BMPKI president Manuel N. Bernardo said the show was "disrespectful of a senior citizen." Bernardo requested Laguardia to have the June 8 episode reviewed.

In said episode, comedian Wally Bayona plays an elderly woman searching for her relatives. The Pelaez family, led by Pal (Vic Sotto) and his wife Grace (Pia Guanio), welcomes the woman into their home.

Board members Nicasio Cruz, Lucio Singson Dawar and Orlando Ibe Olgado, in their report to Laguardia, said they found no objectionable scenes in the episode. "The family members' happy response to grandma's desire to stay with them sends a positive message," the review committee said.

The two complaints have prompted the MTRCB to issue a memo to all heads of TV stations and block-time shows to consider "vigilance in ensuring that (as) material, in whole or in part, shall subject persons with disabi-lity to verbal and/or nonverbal ridicule."



Virginity rocks here

MOUNT UNION, Pa.—A MUSIC FESTIVAL with heavy metal, punk, hip-hop and pop music might seem like an unusual place to get baptized, but Crestmont is a third-ball with strict rules: No alcohol, no drugs and sexual activity before marriage.

"It's like the Christian version of Woodstock, basically, except it's neat and clean," said Victor Gibson, 37, from Meadville, Pennsylvania, who brought his wife and five children aged from five to 14 to the three-day festival.

"Take a look back at the crowd," he said, as thousands of fans held their arms in the air, pounding out the beat of a song by Christian band Kutless, whose sound Gibson likened to Metallica. "It's exciting, not fighting, nobody getting fired up."

Dress code

Highlight of the festival, for some, was the baptism. Lily Ellenson, a 12-year-old from Maryland, was one of nearly 300 people who were baptized in a pond on the final day of Creation, which drew around 70,000 people in late June.

Ellenson said she decided to be baptized after hearing a speaker at one of the activities. "I felt God was there," Ellenson recounted. "I could feel Him all around me."

Now in its 30th year and growing bigger, the festival is like many secular summer music festivals—thousands of young people camping out, getting muddy in the rain and eagerly hunting down their heroes for autographs.

But there seem to be a more personal rules.

Dorothy Adams, a 54-year-old in disability who drove from Daytona, Florida, with his motorbike on a trailer behind his camper van, had placed a placard on the windscreen of his vehicle reading: "Unsaved. Without Christian woman 4 rally." He said he hadn't heard back from any women.

Wearing a T-shirt that said "Jesus Junkie," purely obscured by his long beard, Adams said, "It's hard to find a Christian woman, there's so few of them around."

Reuters

Cheer Factor

'Charge Hollywood'

Inspirational speaker Bob Lotz said he had five children, asking: "Me like how they're made. Sex is beautiful when it's in marriage. It's what God has designed. It's awesome ... God loves a lollipop."

Jonathan Andrus, 29, part-time musician and insurance salesman, said people were drawn to Crestmont to find meaning.

"Our materialistic, hedonistic, self-centered society leaves people empty, and they're looking for answers," he said, his fans lit up by tens of thousands of candles held aloft by the crowd at midnight.

Courtney Mclaren, a 19-year-old student from Wilmington, Delaware, said she felt like the US was heading towards a "spiritual" war. "It's like America is screwing us a very thin line ... it could go either way, and it pretty much depends on ... our generation," McLaren said. "We've got to change Hollywood now, we've got to ... get more of our bands out into the mainstream and bring some good messages."

Personal mission

But some were on a more personal mission.

OPENS JULY 10

"A BIG VISUAL EFFECTS EXTRAVAGANZA!"
—Dan Lindroos / SOUNDTRACK.NET

"Has the HIGHEST SCREAMS-PER-CAPITA ratio in the history of action-adventure films, and a BETTER THRILL-PER-MINUTE deal than most."
—Joe Leydon / VARIETY

TRAPPED IN A LOST WORLD THAT IS ABOUT TO END...
3,950 MILES BENEATH THE EARTH...
CAN THEY ESCAPE IN TIME?

OPENING THIS WEEK

Ala Verde, Ala Pobre

Stars: Jose Capri, Ike Vizconde, Cheng Jocson

Directed by Celestin Easton

Former rebel (Jocson) and his hapunuki wife (Capri) move on a chancy route beside the railroad tracks in search as justice in an uprooty area by a mask (Jocson) and his mistress (Capri). The digital movie got three awards from Gawad Urian 2008: Best Actress for Capri, Actor for Vizconde, Screenplay for Jorge Reyes and Jocson. Director calls it a "commentary on corruption." Exclusively in Industrias Robinsons Galleria.

Kambyo

Stars: Ronjie Garcia, Rayan Dorog, Johnson Tolindo, Harold Manuwere, Cebu del Rosario

Directed by Jennifer Marquez

Three guys take a road trip on their summer break. Shooting from UP Diliman to Boros province, they discover love and uncover secret desires from the town behind "Ang Ulan ni Amorsit" and "Ang Lolabe ni Pastin." Out 30 many, says screenwriter Lee Rosello, is his "most accessible" work so far. The group's previous movie, "Ang Ti-ling," was named to the New York Gay and Lesbian Film Festival.

Journey to the Center of the Earth (3D)

Stars: Brendan Fraser, Josh Hutcherson, Anita Briem

Directed by Eric Brevig

An updated version of the classic Jules Verne novel, this adventure saga takes an unassuming science professor (Fraser) on a thrilling journey to underground worlds. Sci-Fi Movie Page.com thinks it "looks like a Goonies sequel." Ione Rich of ClassicalMovie.com agrees, says it's "predictable, cheesy, edgy" and "Goldmember" of Soundtrack.Net calls it a "big special effects extravaganza."

The Warlords

Stars: Jet Li, Andy Lau, Takeshi Kaneshiro

Directed by Peter Chan

Based on a Chinese epic, "The Assassination of Bin," this movie chronicles the struggles of three blood brothers, according to reports, mostly built of the film's $40-million budget went to the cast. Cinemaroll.com commends "Li, the dramatic actor, not the martial artist." For this movie, Li won Best Actor at the Hong Kong Film Awards. "Interesting note: Li plays his role well to his $15-million paycheck."

Barako

Stars: Arnold Reyes, Lee Meriano, Carlos Morabaro, Daniels Fernandez, Sandino Jose, Ross Rezabal-Castillon, Bebe Cervantes, Arthie Johnson

Directed by Marcelito Pelit and Emman Pascual

A young man named Poldoian (Reyes) galvanizes his town-mates into actively participating in the community's economic and political growth during the Filipino-American War. Described as a "thought-provoking commentary" that film "brings out a contemporary reading of ... Filipino life," Rhod Nocerio opines. Supported by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, it runs at the Indistrias Robinsons Galleria for a week.

Mamma Mia!

Stars: Meryl Streep, Pierce Brosnan, Colin Firth, Stellan Skarsgard, Amanda Seyfried

Directed by Phyllida Lloyd

Based on a Broadway hit that ran on Abba songs to compel the story of a bride (Seyfried) who invites the three men (Firth, Brosnan, Skarsgard) suspected as her dad to her wedding—much to the dismay of her mom (Streep). Emanuel Levy of emanuellevy.com says "a promising but good old-fashioned counter-programming hit ... The biggest challenge of every musical is how to integrate the songs into an appealing, credible story."